School of Theology at Claremont
1001 1423725

THE FAITHS: Varieties of Christian Expression
*Edited by* L. P. JACKS

# METHODISM

W. BARDSLEY BRASH, M.A., B.D., B.Litt.

The Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

650

James C Baker

THE FAITHS
VARIETIES OF CHRISTIAN EXPRESSION
*Edited by* L. P. JACKS
M.A., LL.D.

# METHODISM

# METHODISM

BX
8231
B7
1928

BY
W. BARDSLEY BRASH
M. A., B. D., B. Litt.

GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.
1928

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

29-7015

*First Published in 1928*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

# EDITOR'S PREFACE

A WORD of explanation seems to be needed in regard to the title and the sub-title which have been chosen for this series.

There is *one* faith, says St. Paul; but the title of the series indicates more than one. A difficulty unquestionably exists at that point. It has not been overlooked.

Had the promoters of this series adopted the former point of view and called it "the Faith" instead of "the Faiths", they would have answered in advance an important question which the series itself should be left to answer. But, equally, by calling the series "the Faiths", instead of "the Faith", have they not prejudged the question in another way?

Of the two positions the latter seemed the less dogmatic. Let us take the world as we find it, in which the Faiths show themselves as a plurality, and then, if they are really one, or many varieties of the same, or if only one is true and the rest false, let the fact appear from the accounts they give of themselves.

On no other terms could full liberty have been accorded to the writers who contribute to the series; on no other terms could the task of editing the series

be fairly carried out. It would have been obviously unfair to demand of each of the contributors that he should exhibit the faith that is in him as ultimately identical with the faith that is in each of his fellow-contributors. It would have been obviously unfair to deny to any contributor the right to exhibit his own faith as the only true faith and all the rest as false. It would have been obviously unfair to assume that faith is necessarily singular because St. Paul so describes it. For the degree of authority to be attributed to the words of St. Paul is precisely one of the points on which the contributors to the series must be allowed to differ and to speak for themselves.

The same considerations apply to the sub-title of the series—" Varieties of Christian Expression ". It may be that Christianity has only *one* mode of expression, and that it ceases to be Christianity when expressed in any other way. But to take that for granted would ill become the editor of such a series as this, and it would become him still worse if he deliberately planned the series so as to lead up to that conclusion. Again we must take the world as we find it. Among those who claim to be Christians many varieties of expression unquestionably exist which may or may not be only different ways of expressing the same original truth. So far as the editor is concerned this must be left an open question. If to some writers in the series it should seem good to deny the name of Christian to those whose modes of expression differ from their own, they must not be precluded from doing so, and the reader will judge for himself

between the claim and the counter-claim. Certainly the hope is entertained that from the presentation of differences in this series there may emerge some unities hitherto unsuspected or dimly seen; but that will be as it may. The issue is not to be forced.

To present a complete logical justification of our title and sub-title is perhaps not possible, and such justification as we have here offered will probably commend itself only to the pragmatic mind. But objections taken to these titles will be found on examination to be objections to the series itself. How, we might ask, can any earnest and eminent Christian, believing his own variety of Christian expression to be better than the rest, logically justify his co-operation, in such a series as this, with other earnest and eminent Christians whose beliefs in that matter run counter to his own? None the less, they are here co-operating.

That such co-operation has been found possible may be reckoned one of the signs of the times. The explanation of it lies, not in logic, but in charity.

L. P. JACKS

# AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IT seemed best to me, in writing this book, to show at some length the way in which Methodism arose, and to devote considerable space to telling the story of the Wesleys and their helpers. I believe that it is only with such a background that we can realize rightly the meaning and purport of Methodism, understand its progress throughout the world, and also its meaning for this age.

It is obvious that, in discussing Methodism in a book of this size, much must be omitted; but I believe that the main outlines both of its history and work are here depicted.

The views expressed in this book are my own, and for them I alone am responsible.

It is impossible in a short preface to give thanks to the many writers to whom I am indebted, but I desire, above all, to thank Dr. John S. Simon for his four invaluable books on the life and work of John Wesley; and also my friend, Rev. Henry Bett, M.A. (Professor of Pastoral Theology and Church History, Handsworth College), for his great kindness in reading the proofs of this book and for his many helpful suggestions.

W. B. B.

# CONTENTS


| | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| | EDITOR'S PREFACE | v |
| | AUTHOR'S PREFACE | ix |
| CHAPTER | | |
| I. | EPWORTH AND OXFORD | 1 |
| II. | GEORGIA AND ALDERSGATE | 13 |
| III. | THE EARLY DAYS OF THE REVIVAL | 30 |
| IV. | THE WORLD IS MY PARISH | 41 |
| V. | A NEST OF SINGING BIRDS | 61 |
| VI. | WESLEY'S THEOLOGY | 72 |
| VII. | SOCIAL AND THEOLOGICAL BATTLES | 87 |
| VIII. | WESLEY AND HIS HELPERS | 107 |
| IX. | THE RISE OF AMERICAN METHODISM | 124 |
| X. | THE PROGRESS OF AMERICAN METHODISM | 142 |
| XI. | THE SEPARATION OF METHODISM FROM THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND | 152 |
| XII. | METHODIST SECESSIONS | 166 |
| XIII. | THE GOVERNMENT AND UNION OF METHODISM | 178 |
| XIV. | METHODISM—A MISSIONARY CHURCH | 186 |
| | APPENDIX.—GENERAL STATISTICS OF METHODISM, 1927 | 200 |
| | INDEX | 203 |

# METHODISM

## CHAPTER I

## EPWORTH AND OXFORD

THE Methodist Church is inseparably connected with the life and work of John and Charles Wesley, and with the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century. We believe that the best and simplest way to understand its meaning and message is to watch the lives of its pioneers, to seek to understand their religious experience, and to study carefully their triumphs and also their vicissitudes. Let us, then, go straight to the source of this great river. We know its location, for this stream rises in the Epworth Rectory. There we see a rector and his wife—Samuel and Susannah Wesley. It is necessary to consider, first, the stock from which these two sprang.

Samuel Wesley was the son of John Wesley, who graduated at Oxford in 1655, became the Vicar of Winterbourne Whitchurch in 1658, and was ejected in 1662 because he refused to comply with the Act of Uniformity. After this he was an itinerant preacher and passed through days of severe persecution, and was imprisoned both at Poole and Dorchester. He died

in 1670 at the age of thirty-four. The father of this John Wesley was Bartholomew, who at the University —most probably Oxford—studied both divinity and physic. He became the Vicar of Charmouth in Dorset. He was a supporter of the Commonwealth, and was ejected from his living at the Restoration. After this he preached when occasion gave him opportunity, and also did the work of a physician. He survived his son one year. The Wesleys were a collateral branch of the Wellesley family, and were thus linked to the family of which the Duke of Wellington was a member.

It is well to remember that, although Samuel Wesley was a clergyman of the Church of England, his father and grandfather belonged to Nonconformist stock, and that both had been ejected from their livings. Samuel Wesley was a student at a Dissenting Academy in Stoke Newington, where he had as a fellow-student Daniel Defoe. It was while here that he determined to enter the ministry of the Church of England. He tramped from London to Oxford, and became a student at Exeter College. Although he was extremely poor, yet by great frugality and by his journalistic efforts he paid his way at Oxford, and left the University less poor than when he entered it.

The father of Susannah Wesley was Dr. Annesley, who was connected with the family of the Earl of Anglesey. Dr. Annesley was Vicar of St. Giles, Cripplegate, but was ejected in 1662. He became a well-known dissenting minister in London. He was a man of a rich religious experience. His last words were, "I will die praising Thee. . . . I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness! Satisfied! Satisfied!" He died in 1696, in the seventy-seventh year of his age. Daniel

Defoe was a member of his congregation, and wrote of his minister :

> The sacred bow he so divinely drew
> That every shaft both hit and overthrew.

This short notice of the ancestry of Samuel and Susannah Wesley will help us to understand the story of the Wesleys. We do well to remember that both the father and mother of John and Charles Wesley were touched with race, and came from sturdy and much-suffering Nonconformist stock. It is interesting to remember that Thomas Fuller, the Church historian, was connected with the Wesley family.

The Rector of Epworth and his wife were both loyal members of the Church of England. Samuel Wesley was a man of scholarly life, as his *Commentary on the Book of Job* testifies. Pope, writing to Swift about Samuel Wesley, says : " I call him what he is—a learned man, and I engage you will approve his prose more than you did his poetry." He was Rector of Epworth for thirty-eight years. His life was one of considerable hardship, for he was often heavily pressed by financial problems. The cares of a large family made heavy claims, and for a time Samuel was imprisoned for debt in Lincoln prison. The home at Epworth was marked by frugality, and the training was severe and spartan. In the days when her husband was in Lincoln jail, on being asked by Dr. Sharp, Archbishop of York, " Tell me whether you ever really wanted bread ? ", Susannah Wesley replied : " My lord, I will freely own to your grace that, strictly speaking, I never did want bread. But then I had so much care to get it before it was ate, and to pay for it after, as has often made it very

unpleasant to me. And I think to have bread on such terms is the next degree of wretchedness to having none at all." We do not wonder that times were difficult in that home, for the children were many and the salary of the rector was only £50 a year. But as we look back upon those days it is not at the poverty we gaze, but rather at the noble bravery of the clergyman's wife. She schemed and planned not only for the material welfare of her children, but chiefly for their spiritual well-being. She reserved certain definite periods of time every week in which she spoke separately to her children of the claims of the Christian religion.

The fire at the Epworth Rectory and the dramatic deliverance of John Wesley made her give special attention to him, for she believed that his being as a brand plucked from the burning testified to the fact that God had some special and great work for him to do. She wrote in her diary: "I do intend to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child." Thursday night was regularly devoted to him while he was at home, and also afterwards. He pleaded that she would continue to keep this vigil of prayer. Susannah Wesley was, indeed, the Mother of Methodism, and the early days of the movement owed much to her spiritual insight and her fearlessness of new adventures. She did much to break down the inherent conservatism of her son John. On the occasion of her husband's absence in London to attend Convocation she gathered her children and servants together in the rectory kitchen. Others asked permission to attend, and soon about two hundred gathered there. She read to them some awakening sermons, and concluded with family prayers. The news of these meetings somewhat alarmed

the absent rector; but as her husband did not command that they should cease, they were continued until Samuel Wesley returned to Epworth. Some objections were made in Epworth to these meetings, and the word "conventicle" was used by those who objected to them. To this Susannah Wesley replied: "And what does their calling it a conventicle signify? Does it alter the nature of the thing? Or do you think what they say is a sufficient reason to forbear a thing that has already done much good, and may, by the blessing of God, do much more?"

When we look into this eighteenth-century rectory we see there "low living and high thinking". There was much culture of mind and soul revealed in this home. For out of it came Samuel Wesley, who was chief usher at Westminster, friend of Pope and Atterbury, and later headmaster at Blundell's School, Tiverton; John and Charles Wesley; and those daughters whose lives were strangely mingled with joy and sorrow, but whose minds were keen and alert. One of them, who became Mrs. Hall, was well known in the circle of the friends of Samuel Johnson.

John Wesley was the fifteenth of the nineteen children of Samuel and Susannah Wesley, and was born on June 17 (o.s.), 1703, at the Rectory of Epworth. In 1714 he was admitted to Charterhouse as a foundation scholar. It is delightful to remember that his love for Charterhouse grew stronger with the passage of time. In later years, in the midst of his amazingly busy life, we find that again and again he slips away from his endless services in order that he may find rest and refuge within the walls of his old school. Charles Wesley, who was born in 1707, was a scholar

of Westminster from 1716–26, where he lived in the house of his brother Samuel (born 1690, died 1739). In 1720 John Wesley went as an exhibitioner to Christ Church, whither six years later his brother Charles followed him, and where their brother Samuel had been some years before both of them. We can gaze at John Wesley in these days. Thanks to the new edition of the *Journal* and the deciphering of Wesley's diary, we can see him in the very habit that he wore. He is serious and yet there is gaiety in him. He plays tennis, swims in the Cherwell, rides, sits at the coffee-house, is seen at "The King's Head" tavern, dances, reads widely, and amongst the books he reads we note plays (amongst them being Ben Jonson's play *The Alchemist*), and the book with the charming title *Pyrates*. He has friends at many colleges; and we can picture him as we read the brief notes in his diary—"Idle talk", "Intemperate sleep", "Heat in arguing", "Walked in Trinity Gardens", "Was treated by Ditcher at the Coffee House and Tennis Court", "Played two hours at Tennis", "Read *Spectator*", "Sat at New College", "Idleness slays". These short references reveal Wesley as he was, for we see a man fully alive to life, with a certain seriousness of purpose, but not with that passionate zeal which was soon to be his distinguishing mark. Something of immense importance was to happen in his life, and this great change came through certain books being read by him, and through his conversation with a few friends of high seriousness. There were four books which had an immense influence upon him—*Imitatio Christi*, Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, and William Law's *Serious Call to a Devout Life* and his

work on *Christian Perfection*. He read these books with a critical mind, accepting what appealed to him, and questioning those parts with which his reason could not agree. But they contributed a great deal to his spiritual growth, and gave to him a new sense of quest and a passionate longing for holiness.

Wesley tells of the influence of a book and of a friend: "When I was twenty-two I began to see that true religion was seated in the heart. I was, however, very angry at Kempis for being too strict. . . . Meeting likewise with a religious friend, which I never had till now, I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week; I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness; I saw that simplicity of intention and purity of affection, one design in all we speak and do, and one desire ruling all our tempers, are indeed the wings of the soul, without which she can never ascend to God. I sought after this from this hour." It is now almost certain that "the religious friend" was Miss Betty Kirkham, daughter of the Rector of Stanton, near Broadway, and sister of Robert Kirkham (of Merton College, Oxford), an undergraduate friend of John Wesley, and a member of "The Holy Club". It is interesting to remember that John Wesley often rode over from Oxford to Stanton, and that in that lovely Cotswold district he had many friends—at Broadway, Stanton, and Buckland. The most famous member of the group of his friends was Mrs. Pendarves, who later married Dr. Delaney, the Dean of Down. John Wesley talked much with Betty Kirkham, and

there seems little doubt that the one to whom he often wrote and addressed as Varanese was of great help to him in his spiritual development, and that his love went out to her. Suddenly, however, the correspondence ends, and she who so swiftly entered his life as swiftly disappears from it. The works of Jeremy Taylor made a great impression upon him, and led him to realize the absolute necessity of dedicating all his gifts and time to God: "I resolved to dedicate all my life to God—all my thoughts and actions—being thoroughly conscious that there was no medium, but that every part of my life, not some only, must either be a sacrifice to God or myself—what is, in effect, to the devil."

On September 19, 1725, Wesley was ordained deacon by Dr. Potter, Bishop of Oxford, and on March 17, 1726, was elected a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. We can hear the bells ringing merrily in the heart of his father, who writes to his son, on hearing of his election to the fellowship, "Wherever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln." He obtained permission to absent himself from the University, and from April to September 1726 was his father's curate at Wroote, which was a part of the parish of the Rector of Epworth. He then returned to Oxford, and was elected Greek Lecturer and Moderator of Classes and also a Tutor of Lincoln College. In September 1728 he was ordained priest by Dr. Potter. He then returned to Epworth to help his father, and was there until November 1729, when, at the request of Dr. Morley, Rector of Lincoln College, he returned to Oxford, to his work as Fellow of that College. During his absence from Oxford a group of Oxford graduates and undergraduates had

begun to meet together for the study of the classics, for Bible study and prayer. John Wesley joined this group, and in 1729 amongst the members were to be found John and Charles Wesley, Robert Kirkham of Merton, William Morgan of Christ Church. Others soon joined them, amongst them being John Clayton, who later became a strong High Church Vicar in Manchester, and a Jacobite, and friend of the Non-Jurors; and also George Whitefield, whose name is for ever linked with that of the Wesleys. This group soon attracted both the attention and the scorn of many in the University. The high seriousness of its members was foreign to the prevailing tone of Oxford in the eighteenth century, for the spiritual and the scholastic life of the University was at this time pathetically low. The members of this group gave themselves to prayer and fasting, to the visiting of prisoners both at Bocardo and the prison at the Castle, and to the teaching of poor children whom they gathered into a school. They also realized the importance of frequent Communion, and often on their way to Communion were jeered at and taunted. It was at this time they were called "Methodists" by some cynical wit of Christ Church, who said, "There is a new set of Methodists sprung up!" The term "Methodist" was originally applied to certain physicians of ancient times who treated their patients by method rather than in haphazard fashion, and it had been used earlier than the eighteenth century to describe certain scrupulously religious men. John Wesley in later years used this term with certain qualifications, "The People in derision called Methodists", or "The people vulgarly called Methodists", or "The people called Methodists".

The company of devout Oxford men were also called, "The Enthusiasts", "The Reforming Club", "The Holy Club", "The Sacramentarians". John Wesley, in 1732, describes the aims and purposes of this group: "The two points whereunto, by the blessing of God, we had before attained, we endeavoured to hold fast—I mean the doing what good we can; and in order thereto, communicating as often as we had opportunity. To these, by the advice of Mr. Clayton, we have added a third—the observing the fasts of the Church; the general neglect of which we can by no means apprehend to be a lawful excuse for neglecting them."

It is well to remember that in this portion of the eighteenth century the Holy Communion was observed strangely little, and that the Evangelical Revival, especially that which was influenced chiefly by the Wesleys, laid great emphasis upon the observance of this holy sacrament. We can picture this group of devout men gathered together in the room of John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College. But we must not linger there; the men of this "Holy Club" went different ways, as the lives of John Clayton, James Hervey, Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley testify. But its influence upon the Wesleys was very great, both in giving to them new blessings and also in constraining them to seek with deeper hungerings and thirstings some new experience they desired but had not yet attained. It is interesting to remember that the visiting of the Oxford Prison, which was begun by William Morgan, and adopted enthusiastically by John and Charles Wesley, was also a work dear to the heart of their father in his undergraduate days. In 1730 he wrote to his son John Wesley: "Go on in God's

name in the path to which your Saviour has directed you, and that track wherein your father went before you; for when I was an undergraduate at Oxford I visited those in the Castle." In later years John Wesley looked back upon these days with great wistfulness. Oxford was ever dear to him, and the thought of these early days often awoke happy memories.

Wesley was well aware of the slack discipline and the low level of learning which was to be seen in Oxford in his days there. In preparing a University sermon in 1741 he wrote: "Know ye not so much as this, you that are called moral men, that all idleness is immorality; that there is no grosser dishonesty than sloth; that every voluntary blockhead is a knave? He defrauds his benefactors, his parents, and the world; and robs God of his own soul. How few of the vast number who have it in their power are truly learned men! Oh, what is so scarce as learning, save religion!" Yet this knowledge never dulled his love for Oxford. "My tender parent"—he writes the same year—"by whom I have been nourished for now more than twenty years, and from whom, under God, I have received those advantages of which I trust I shall retain a grateful sense till my spirit returns to God who gave it." In 1781 he says: "I love the very sight of Oxford." In 1772 John Wesley, when writing to his brother Charles, says: "I often cry out *vitæ me redde priori*. Let me again be an Oxford Methodist. I am often in doubt whether it would not be best for me to resume all my Oxford rules, great and small." Here we find a kinship betwixt John Wesley and John Henry Newman, two of Oxford's greatest sons; for in 1877 Newman wrote: "Of all human things perhaps Oxford

is nearest my heart, and some parsonages in the country." Wesley could also have subscribed to that last clause, for Buckland, Broadway, Stanton, and Epworth had indeed meant much to him. The lure of Oxford was upon him, and the work was congenial to him. His father was anxious for his son to come to Epworth to be his helper, but the son felt that his true sphere was Oxford. As we read the correspondence which passed betwixt the son and the father we are struck by the reason which constrains Wesley to stay in Oxford, for there he thinks he can best save his own soul. This was the language of a period only, for later the determining factor with him was the salvation of the souls of others. However, a little later, owing to the pressure of his family, he offered himself for the post of Rector of Epworth, but the Prime Minister—Robert Walpole—appointed another candidate. During the period of these negotiations the old rector, Samuel Wesley, passed away. When dying we see something prophetic in him, for he said: "The inward witness, son—the inward witness, that is the proof, the strongest proof of Christianity." To his son Charles he said: "Be steady. The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom; you shall see it, though I shall not."

After the passing of Samuel Wesley it seemed as if John Wesley's life would be spent in Oxford, and that there he would be an able and strenuous don and a guide and inspirer of succeeding generations of undergraduates; but God had other work for him to do—there was another and a greater harvest for him to reap—the academic teachers were not to see him in their midst much longer, for a more imperious call came to him and he swiftly answered it.

## CHAPTER II

## GEORGIA AND ALDERSGATE

IN 1732 George II had granted a charter establishing a new colony in America, which in honour of the King was called Georgia. Its founder was General Oglethorpe. He is a curious and most interesting figure. He was soldier and philanthropist. He had greatly interested himself in the condition of debtors in English prisons, and obtained permission from Parliament to settle debtors in the new colony, of which he himself was the first Governor. He was a worthy forerunner of John Howard. German Protestants, who had been persecuted by the Archbishop of Salzburg, a band of Moravians, and some Scottish Presbyterians were amongst the first settlers of this colony. The trustees of the colony acted in co-operation with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and were anxious that suitable missionaries should be sent out to Georgia to minister to the colony, and also to the neighbouring Indians. One of the trustees was Dr. Burton, of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, who was one of the closest friends of John Wesley. Burton urged John Wesley to go to Georgia, as the work of the colony needed him. Wesley consulted his friends—William Law, John Clayton, Dr. Byrom, and others. He had a real hesitancy about accepting the invitation, for his father had recently

died, and he feared broaching the subject to his mother. When he spoke to her about the invitation, she made the great reply: "Had I twenty sons I should rejoice that they were so employed, though I should never see them more." After this consultation with his mother John Wesley decided to go to Georgia. But he did not go without friends—for together there sailed from England on October 19, 1735, John Wesley and Benjamin Ingham, who were bound for Savannah as missionaries to the Indians, and Charles Wesley, who went as secretary to General Oglethorpe. Charles Wesley was not in holy orders when he decided to go to Georgia. He was, therefore, ordained deacon by Bishop Potter on Sunday, September 21, 1735, and priest by Bishop Gibson on Monday, September 29th. The voyage was a long and eventful one. They left England on October 19, 1735, and arrived at Georgia on February 4, 1736. As we watch these missionaries on board ship we see a group of men apostolic in zeal. They rise early, meditate together, hold services, catechize, watch strictly over their time, and minister to all on the ship. In order to enter into conversation with the Moravians John Wesley learns German. It is interesting to note the books which Wesley read on this voyage, for they show the bent of his mind and that he was looking backward to primitive times and ritual as a way of salvation. He read Nelson's *Festivals and Feasts*; Johnson's *The Unbloody Sacrifice* and *Altar Unveiled and Supported*; *Reformed Devotions*, the work of the Non-Juror, Hickes. We can see him as he reads the *Theologia Germanica*, *Imitatio Christi*, and William Law's *The Serious Call to a Devout Life*. His teacher of German was Ambrosius Tackner, and Wesley,

finding that Tackner had only received lay baptism, rebaptized him—a surprising act—for the validity of lay baptism is unquestionable. In the company of the twenty-six Moravians on board the ship was Bishop Nitschmann, who was going to Georgia to join August Gottlieb Spangenberg, and to organize more fully the Moravian Church in that colony. This band of Moravians greatly influenced Wesley. He was struck by their Christian behaviour, by their devotion, and, above all, by their fearlessness in the face of death during a terrible storm which nearly wrecked the ship. The Moravians sang through the storm without the slightest sense of fear. Wesley asked one of them afterwards: "Was you not afraid?" He answered: "I thank God, no." I asked: "But were not your women and children afraid?" He replied mildly: "No; our women and children are not afraid to die."

Through this storm Wesley realized clearly the transitoriness of the effect of fear as a religious motive. He noticed the terror of the sailors in the tempest, and how swiftly they returned after it to their old, careless ways: "I could not have believed that so little good would have been done by the terror they were in before. But for the future I will never believe them to obey from fear who are dead to the motives of love." In the short entries in his diary we can catch glimpses of Wesley and see his state of mind: "Prayed. Storm greater: afraid!" He who was later to face the angry storms of mobs with a singular quietude had not as yet learned the secret of perfect peace. He was watching his life with a great diligence. He noticed carefully the Moravians, and knew that they possessed a secret which he had not as yet discovered. In his

*Journal* he writes after the storm: "We now enjoyed the calmer weather. I can conceive no difference comparable to that between a smooth and a rough sea, except that which is between a mind calmed by the love of God and one torn up by the storms of earthly passions." The evening before the vessel reached Georgia the lesson read by Wesley included these words: "A great door and effectual is opened"—and he adds the words: "Oh, let no man shut it!"

But Georgia was not to witness the opening of that door! On February 7, 1736, the passengers came ashore, and Wesley at once began his ministry in the colony. It was marked by amazing industry, high devotion, much disputing and misunderstandings, but with little success. His "Georgia" days, and his "Georgia" working, and his "Georgia" thinking were schoolmasters to bring him to a fuller understanding of the Evangelical experience. There would have been no Aldersgate experience without them, and without the Aldersgate experience there would have been no Evangelical Revival. In Georgia he seeks to return to the ritual of primitive times. He baptized with trine immersion; rebaptized the children of Dissenters and declined to bury the dead who had not received Anglican baptism; paid minute attention to the ritual of the Church; guarded the Lord's Table, repelling from it all not baptized by priests episcopally ordained, amongst them being Bolzius, one of the ministers of the Salzburghers, a man for whose character and devotion he had a great regard. Wesley writes in his *Journal*, Sunday, July 17, 1737, concerning this, and says: "I had occasion to make a very unusual trial of the temper of Mr. Bolzius, pastor of the Salzburghers, in which

he behaved with such lowliness and meekness as become a disciple of Jesus Christ." Twelve years later John Wesley received a letter from Georgia from Bolzius, and writes in his *Journal*—October 28, 1749: "What a true Christian piety and simplicity breathe in these lines! And yet this very man, when I was at Savannah, did I refuse to admit to the Lord's Table, because he was not baptized—that is, not baptized by a minister who had been episcopally ordained. Can any carry High Church zeal higher than this? And how well have I been beaten with my own staff!"

We may get too gloomy an impression of these days in Georgia. It is easy to see his austerities, his rigid and somewhat mechanical Churchmanship; but there is another story to be told, as we see in a letter he writes at this time: "I entirely agree with you that religion is love and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost—the cheerfullest thing in the world: that it is inconsistent with moroseness, sourness, and with what is not according to the gentleness of Jesus." The variety of his work amazes us. We see him at services in this colony, conducted in five languages—English, French, Spanish, Italian, German. He had learned German on board ship in order to talk with the Moravians. He also studied Spanish. He tells us his reason for desiring to know Spanish: "I began to learn Spanish in order to converse with my Jewish parishioners, some of whom seemed nearer the mind of Christ than many of those who call Him Lord." He translated from the Spanish the hymn "O God, my God, my all Thou art". He gathered together a Religious Society of twenty or thirty persons in his house: gave himself with noble devotion to the education of children and taught in

Sunday schools. There is a beautiful story told of Wesley in these days. The children who came to his day school, noticed that a poor child came without shoes and stockings, and they taunted her. Wesley watched them, and the next day he came to school without shoes and stockings. The children were swift to notice this and thought that what the clergyman could do must also be right for the child.

The Wesley of Georgia was not the Wesley of the Revival. Something happened later on that radically changed him; but it is also obvious that the Wesley of Georgia was a noble, devoted man who followed the light as he saw it—and that he was, to quote Cromwell, "of the next best religion to that of a finder—a seeker." It is interesting to notice that, although Wesley is a rigorous Church disciplinarian in questions relative to his own Church, he seeks out the Moravians, meets them in "band meetings", and lives in the same house with them. He tells how he questioned Spangenberg: "I asked Mr. Spangenberg's advice with regard to myself—to my own conduct. He told me he could say nothing till he had asked me two or three questions. 'Do you know yourself? Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?' I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it and asked: 'Do you know Jesus Christ?' I paused and said: 'I know He is the Saviour of the World.' 'True,' replied he, 'but do you know He has saved you?' I answered: 'I hope He has died to save me.' He only added: 'Do you know yourself?' I said: 'I do.' But I fear they were vain words. After my answering he gave me several directions, which

may the good God who sent him enable me to follow."

It was while in Georgia that Wesley published his first hymn-book. It is illuminating to glance through it, and to see the hymns which had stirred and moved him. Amongst these hymns we notice his noble translations of German hymns which have since become the priceless possession of the Churches. We see in this Charlestown hymnal Lange's great hymn, "O God, Thou bottomless abyss", and Freylinghausen's "O Jesu, source of calm repose". One third of the hymns in the *Charlestown Hymn Book* were written by Isaac Watts—hymns which Wesley greatly prized, and had been freely used by him in the days of "The Holy Club" at Oxford. Wesley also found room in this hymnal for his father's well-known hymn, "Behold the Saviour of Mankind". The hopes of both Charles and John Wesley as to their work in Georgia were soon frustrated. Charles Wesley left the colony on July 26, 1736, after a ministry of a little over five months. John Wesley, however, stayed in Georgia until December 1737. The difficulties of his task were great. There were problems which were bound to arise in a colony which gave a home to men so dissimilar—prisoners and debtors, Presbyterians and Moravians, and the adventurers who always are to be found in a colony in its early days. There can be no doubt that Wesley became unpopular through his strong opposition to slavery and through his fight against the drink traffic. His imperiousness, his extreme High Churchmanship, also alienated many. Things were brought to a head by his love affair with Sophie Hopkey, her swift transference of her affection to Mr. Williamson and her marriage to him, and Wesley's doubtful wisdom

in repelling her from Holy Communion. He states clearly to her his reasons for not allowing her to communicate: (1) she had not signified the day before Communion her desire to come; (2) she had not openly declared that she had truly repented. He then tells her: "If you offer yourself at the Lord's Table on Sunday, I will advertise you (as I have done more than once) wherein you have done wrong. And when you have openly declared yourself to have truly repented I will administer to you the mysteries of God."

Wesley acted from the highest motives. But it all seems to us strangely arbitrary, and we do not wonder that many of the colonists thought that he was actuated by the spirit of a disappointed lover. He was frivolously charged to appear before the Savannah Court. He attended six sittings of the Court, and still his trial was delayed. Sick at heart, disappointed by the results of his work, and realizing that he would never find justice in the Courts of Savannah, he returned to England. He arrived in London on February 3, 1738. His *Journal* reveals his feelings as to the "Georgia" ministry. "I went to America to convert the Indians; but, oh! who shall convert me, who is he that will convert me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion; I can talk well—nay, and believe myself, whilst no danger is near—but let death look me in the face and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain.' . . . Oh! who will deliver me from this fear of death? What shall I do? Where shall I fly from it?" Yet even in his recriminations we see gleams of light: "I have no hope but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of

Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." A few days later he writes of his ministry in Georgia: "What have I learned myself in the meantime? Why (what I least suspected), that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God. . . . That alienated, as I am, from the life of God, I am a child of wrath, an heir of hell." There is no doubt that Wesley wrote these words in vexation of spirit when his judgement was blinded by depression caused by the remembrance of the disappointing happenings in Georgia. In later years, in reviewing this estimate of his life, he says, speaking of the phrase: "I was never myself converted to God" . . . "I am not sure of this"; and after the words "I am a child of wrath, an heir of hell" he added the comment, "I believe not. . . . I had even then the faith of a servant, though not that of a son." . . .

On February 1, 1738, Wesley arrived at Deal, and a few days later George Whitefield sailed for Georgia.

Wesley, on his arrival in England, soon revealed the intensity of his quest—he was restless for some new and deeper experience. He could not add intensity to his life, for he revealed throughout his "Georgia" days a rigid discipline and a tireless consecration to his task. He yearns, however, more and more for some surer apprehension of God's presence and of His saving grace. He longs to step out of the realm of servile fear into that of filial assurance. He preached with a new sense of alarm, and his message created swift antagonisms, and most of the pulpits from which he preached were soon closed against him. But he was not deterred; he moved straight onwards to the goal of a richer experience. He meets in the Religious

Societies of those days, and seeks in fellowship to find new power and fresh light. He is greatly helped by Peter Böhler, a Moravian and a man of real spiritual insight. Wesley met him on February 7, 1738. Wesley rightly speaks of that day as "a day much to be remembered". They "conversed much", read the Greek Testament together, and talked of the meaning of faith. Böhler realized that Wesley was too prone to imagine that spiritual experience came as a result of syllogistic reasoning and said to him: "My brother, my brother, your philosophy must be purged away." Böhler saw clearly Wesley's proneness to rely on ratiocination. In childhood his father had said to his son John: "Child, you think to carry everything by dint of argument; but you will find how little is done in the world by close reasoning." Böhler taught that living faith creates peace and holiness, and that this faith is nothing else than "a sure trust and confidence that a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven and he reconciled to God's favour."

Wesley found it difficult to accept this interpretation of Christian truth, so Böhler pointed Wesley to the law and the testimony. He therefore studied the New Testament with deeper intensity and found there much corroboration of Böhler's teaching. Wesley, losing confidence in his religious experience, was inclined to cease from preaching. Böhler said to him: "Preach faith *till* you have it; and then *because* you have it you *will* preach faith." These words at first glance seem to declare a somewhat doubtful morality. S. T. Coleridge writes the illuminating note upon Böhler's words: "Is not this *too* like, tell a lie long enough, and often enough, and you will be sure to end in believing

it? And yet much may be said where the moral interest of mankind demands it and reason does not countermand; or where the Scripture seems expressly to affirm it." Southey rightly says of Böhler: "This man, a person of no ordinary powers of mind, became Wesley's teacher. It is no slight proof of his commanding intellect that he was listened to as such." Wesley tells us what influence Böhler had upon him: "By him, in the hands of the great God, I was clearly convinced of unbelief—of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved."

While Wesley is eagerly seeking he goes to Oxford, and we see him there in a meeting of a Religious Society: "Being in Mr. Fox's Society, my heart was so full that I could not confine myself to the forms of prayer we were accustomed to use there. Neither do I purpose to be confined to them any more, but to pray indifferently, with a form or without, as I may find suitable to particular occasions." On the following Easter Sunday Wesley preached in "our college Chapel" of "Lincoln", and at the end of the day wrote: "I see the promise, but it is far off." Böhler seeks to help Wesley by bringing some of his friends to witness to the joy of faith. They sang together Richter's hymn, which Wesley had translated in Georgia.

> My soul before Thee prostrate lies,
> To Thee, her source, my spirit flies;
> My wants I mourn, my chains I see,
> O let Thy presence set me free.

Wesley tells of the influence which came to him through his conversation with Böhler, the testimony of his other friends, and the singing of the hymn: "I was

now thoroughly convinced; and by the grace of God I resolved to seek it unto the end: (1) By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or part, upon my own work of righteousness, on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up. (2) By adding to the constant use of all other means of grace continual prayer for this very thing—justifying, saving grace, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for me; a trust in Him as my Christ, my sole justification, sanctification, and redemption." On May 4th Böhler set sail for Carolina, and Wesley writes in his *Journal*: "Oh, what a work hath God begun since his coming to England! Such a one as shall never come to an end till heaven and earth shall pass away." Böhler left before Wesley entered into that experience of faith for which he so passionately longed; but Wesley had not long to wait—he was, indeed, not far from this kingdom for which he so tremulously yearned.

While John Wesley was passionately striving for a deeper realization of God's peace his brother Charles entered the noon-day experience of divine love. Charles Wesley in his *Journal* (Thursday, May 11th) tells of his meeting with a Mr. Bray: "God sent Mr. Bray to me, a poor ignorant mechanic, who knows nothing but Christ; yet by knowing Him knows and discerns all things." Owing to the guidance and prayers of Mr. Bray, Charles Wesley found a deeper rest for his soul on Whit Sunday (May 21, 1738). But it was not until the following Wednesday that John Wesley found the great peace. May 24, 1738, is the great day in the Calendar of Methodism; it speaks of an epoch-making experience in the life of John Wesley. It is difficult

to give a name to this happening which came to Wesley then. To call it the day of his conversion is to be untrue to all the long years of his devotion and sacrifice. It is generally called his evangelical conversion, but that term often seems to be insufficient. It was the day of glorious illumination, the day which lifted his life to a new and higher level, that changed his thinking, willing, and loving. It was the day that made him fling himself into the saddle and become an itinerant Gospel preacher in three kingdoms. It offered him an entirely new orientation. It was the day which altered his language, his outlook, and gave to him a real freedom, a new passion, a more splendid vision, and swift adaptibility to the great needs of his age. It matters not what we call it, as long as we realize that there is a world of difference betwixt his experience *ante* May 24, 1738, and *post* May 24, 1738. The Lord came that day into the very midst of his life, and stood at the very springs of his will, thought, and love, and transformed the somewhat rigid, yet always sincere man, into a man of fiery and apostolic ardour. We cannot imagine him now speaking the same language as that which he used when he declined his father's invitation to become his curate, saying: "I can better save my soul in Oxford." He was henceforth as careful of his own salvation and of personal discipline—but he finds his life by losing it, he seeks to save the souls of others. He could not now write as he wrote to his father in reply to his desire that he should minister at Epworth. "At Epworth I should have the care of two thousand souls. I see not how any man living can take care of a hundred; at least I could not." Now he yearned to preach the Gospel to all, and looked

upon the whole world as his parish. No one can study his "Oxford" and his "Georgia" thinking without realizing that it is poles asunder from his "Aldersgate" thinking. Dr. Forsyth once said to the writer: "What we need is not cultured piety but dynamic faith." Wesley had tried with all the passion and intensity of his rigorous devotion the way of cultured piety, but in it there was no sure rest for his soul; he now flung himself upon God, came to Christ as a little child, and entered into the peace which passeth all understanding. On this day there came to him that sure sense of Christ's love—such as came to Augustine in the garden when he took up the book and read: "Not in chambering and wantonness . . . But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ"; such as came to Bunyan when he heard the words, "My Grace is sufficient for thee"; such as came to Pascal when he wrote: "From about 10.30 to 12.30—Fire—God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob. Not of the Philosophers and Savants — Certitude! Certitude! Sentiment! Joy. Peace. Forgetful of the world and of all except God. The world has not known Thee—*but I have known Thee.* Joy! Joy! Joy! Tears of Joy! Renunciation—complete and sweet."

There is something tidal in this experience. It is not something about which we argue, but something at which we gaze in holy wonder. It takes hold of Wesley—lifts him out of the pit of despair and puts a new song into his mouth. It changes him from being a blundering, somewhat futile, yet ever sincere man, into one who has a new sureness of touch, a sense of mission, and an almost magic mastery over life and the needs of his age.

Let us watch carefully the events of the great day of his life—May 24, 1738. He tells the story in detail. At five in the morning he opened his New Testament on these words: "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that we should be partakers of the divine nature." Before he goes out from his house he opens again the New Testament and reads: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." In the afternoon he visits, at the invitation of another, St. Paul's Cathedral, and hears the anthem: "Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins." Surely the message of that anthem spoke to the heart of Wesley. In the evening he went to one of the Religious Societies, which was meeting in Aldersgate Street. We will let him tell his own story. "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a Society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the *Epistle to the Romans*. About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart." When we turn to the *Journal* of Charles Wesley we see how the day closed, for Charles Wesley writes: "Towards ten my brother was brought

in triumph by a troop of friends, and declared, 'I believe.' We sang the hymn with great joy and parted with prayer." The hymn referred to by Charles Wesley was the one he had written on the day previous —May 23rd—"Where shall my wondering soul begin?"

It testifies not only of the great experience which had come to the Wesleys but also of the necessity to declare it to others:

> Outcasts of men, to you I call,
> Harlots, and publicans, and thieves!
> He spreads His arms to embrace you all;
> Sinners alone His grace receive.

This is, indeed, one of the great scenes of the Christian Church—two brothers, after much weary seeking and heart-breaking disappointments, had at last found peace. There is no need to give a title to their experience, except to say that it revealed to them life in a new light. Life's tasks were now seen with a fresh vividness, and John and Charles Wesley became there and then conscious of new sources of power. It is all a question of spiritual climate. We can in a moment *feel* the difference betwixt the atmosphere of the "Georgia" *Journal* and of the *Journal* which tells of the happenings after May 24, 1738. The "Georgia" *Journal* is somewhat chilly and icy; after May 24, 1738, the air is warm, and we know that the time of the singing of birds has come. There is now the note of certainty and of victory. John Wesley, with a fine sense of the meaning of this great change, prefixed to his "Georgia" *Journal* these words: "What shall we say, then? That Israel, which followed after the Law of Righteousness, hath not

attained to the Law of Righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by Faith, but as it were by the Works of the Law." The two Wesleys now have a Gospel; they are heralds, they have something to offer. The Spirit of the Lord is upon them because He hath anointed them to preach the Gospel to the poor. They no longer seek to solve life's problems in their own strength, nor is faith or grace something which they partially win for themselves. Of both John and Charles Wesley we can rightly use the words of Browning: this man

> Throws himself on God, and unperplexed
> Seeking shall find Him.

## CHAPTER III

## THE EARLY DAYS OF THE REVIVAL

JOHN WESLEY now seeks for some time of quiet before his great campaign begins. He has been greatly helped by the teaching of the Moravians ; and so he journeys to Hernhuth, situated on the borders of Bohemia, to see them in their own home. He is impressed by the piety of this Christian community, by their careful methods of catechetical instruction, by their fellowship, by their meetings in small groups in which the members sought together to know more of the grace of God. He watched them carefully, with a great admiration, but also with critical judgement. There can be no doubt that he learned much from them. He writes to his brother Samuel : " God has given me at length the desire of my heart. I am with a Church whose conversation is in Heaven, in whom is the mind of Christ, the spirit of meekness and love, which uniformly and continually animates all their conversation. Oh ! how high and holy a thing Christianity is, and how widely different from that which is so called, though it neither purifies the heart nor views the life after the image of our blessed Redeemer ! " Wesley found in the teachings of this colony something which agreed with his own personal experience. He was deeply impressed by Christian David. In this man he saw clearly revealed

the power of living faith, and a life of deep spirituality. Wesley would fain have lingered here—but he knew that he must depart, for there was a work for him to do in England. "I would gladly", says Wesley, "have spent my life here, but, my Master calling me to labour in other parts of His vineyard, I was constrained to take my leave of this happy place."

On his return to England he met in Religious Societies, but was not often seen in the pulpits of the Anglican Churches—for the incumbents were alarmed by his new intensity, and closed their churches against "the wild enthusiast". He was by no means alarmed by this exclusion from the Anglican Churches—for he relied upon the articles and homilies and believed that he was true to their teaching, and writes: "The doctrines we preach are the doctrines of the Church of England—indeed, the fundamental doctrines of the Church, clearly laid down, both in her prayers, articles, and homilies. I differ in no point from those who adhere to them, but I differ from that part of the clergy who dissent from the Church" (*Journal*, September 13, 1739). No excommunication can silence this fiery prophet, nor keep him from exercising his ministry. He preaches at Newgate, and in November 1738 accompanies condemned malefactors to Tyburn. One of them had found peace through his message, and had asked him to be with him at the end. Charles Wesley also joins in the procession, and John Wesley, in reference to the passing of the malefactors who had found peace, says: "O Lord, God of my fathers, accept even me among them, and cast me not out from among thy children."

John Wesley prefaces the third part of the *Journal* (September 17, 1738, to November 1, 1739) with the

words: "If this council or this work be of man it will come to naught; but if it be of God ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight against God." As we look back upon the work of Wesley we can clearly trace God's guiding hand. Wesley was, indeed, building better than he knew. We see that his motto was *Ohne Hast, Ohne Rest.* In his seventy-fifth year he writes to a friend: "You do not understand my manner of life; though I am always in haste I am never in a hurry, because I never undertake more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit. It is true that I travel four or five thousand miles in a year, but I generally travel alone in my carriage, and consequently am as retired ten hours in the day as if I was in a wilderness."

It was the message which created the movement: the living word which slowly but surely fashioned the organization. He began by working with the existing means, and then, when he found these insufficient, created other forms for his religious activity. He had close fellowship with the Religious Societies which, founded by Dr. Horneck (Prebendary at Westminster and Preacher at the Savoy) in 1678, had exercised a great influence upon the lives of many of their adherents. These societies were only for members of the Church of England, and the rules of them carefully laid down that their work was complementary and not contradictory to that of the Church of England. The first rule of the first Societies was: "All that enter the Society shall resolve upon a holy and serious life." Wesley joined one of these Societies, which met in Fetter Lane and had as its leader James Hutton.

Although this was undoubtedly a Church of England Society, the influence of Moravianism was soon felt

in it, and was eventually to alter the character of its meetings. Here Wesley found a band of seriously minded people, and together they sought for further illumination and for a deeper realization of God's presence and love. Wesley tells us of a love-feast held in this Fetter Lane Society, and that when it closed some remained in order that they might "continue in instant prayer". Wesley writes of this meeting: "About three in the morning, as we continued instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty we broke out with one voice: 'We praise Thee, O God: we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.'" (January 1, 1739.) Wesley was always swift to relate his spiritual experience to renewed activities, and thus was able to keep a fine sanity and to keep clear from the perils of emotional experience. He harnessed to his activities the power of spiritual vision.

The days following this New Year's experience are crowded with work—he preaches in the churches where he can gain an entrance, visits Newgate and preaches to the captives, expounds to various Societies, visits Oxford, and tells us: "I had an opportunity of preaching once again to the poor prisoners in the Castle." We find him thus busily engaged until the call comes to him to go to Bristol: "During my stay in London I was fully employed between our own Society in Fetter Lane and many others, where I was continually desired to expound; so that I had no thought of leaving London, when I received, after several others, a letter from Mr. Whitefield and another from Mr. Seward, entreating me

in the most pressing manner to come to Bristol." Wesley was reluctant to go. At this time he thought that his life was near its end—he was distressed by illness and had vivid premonitions of approaching death. The commonly believed story that Wesley was a man of iron constitution is far from being the truth. He was a frail child, and the story of his long life is that of a frail man who by strength of will and reliance upon God did a work which could not have been performed by a giant unaided by resources other than his own. He had a tendency towards consumption, and in the year 1753 said farewell to life and composed this epitaph:

HERE LIETH THE BODY

OF

JOHN WESLEY

A BRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE BURNING
WHO DIED OF A CONSUMPTION IN THE FIFTY-FIRST YEAR
OF HIS AGE
NOT LEAVING, AFTER HIS DEBTS ARE PAID,
TEN POUNDS BEHIND HIM:

PRAYING
GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER

HE ORDERED THAT THIS, IF ANY, INSCRIPTION SHOULD BE
PLACED ON HIS TOMBSTONE

We have made this short digression because it is well for us, at the outset of our study of his great campaign of fifty-three years of unceasing toil, to dispel a popular misconception.

While Wesley was hesitating as to going to Bristol, the question was referred to the Fetter Lane Society. It was agreed that it should be decided by lot,

and, says Wesley, "By this it was determined that I should go."

Whitefield had returned from America on November 30, 1738, and at once joined the Wesleys. John Wesley writes of this meeting with Whitefield: "On December 11th God gave us once more to take sweet counsel together." There is an eager expectancy in their hearts, for they believed that they were at the eve of great happenings. In the early days of January 1739 the Wesleys, Whitefield, and a few others met together for a day of fasting and prayers, and parted, as George Whitefield says, "with a full conviction that God was about to do great things amongst them". On February 17, 1739, Whitefield began his open-air preaching, and the success of this new venture was amazing. Whitefield, with his great oratory, his organ-sounding voice, and with his passionate appeals, gathered enormous crowds, and his effect upon them was electrical. He loved the task and his soul thrilled to the joy of preaching in the open air, and his preaching had a swift and wonderful effect upon the many thousands who came to listen to his message. We can see Whitefield quiver with delight as he says, "There is no pulpit like a mound; no sounding-board like Heaven." Whitefield describes the crowds, the effect of his preaching and his own emotions: "Having no righteousness of their own, they were glad to hear of a Jesus who came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. . . . The first discovery of their being affected was to see white gutters made by the tears which fell over their black cheeks. Hundreds were brought under deep conviction. . . . The open firmament above me, the prospect of the adjacent fields with the sight of thousands and thousands—some in

coaches, some on horseback, and some in the adjacent trees, and at times all affected and drenched in tears together, to which sometimes was added the solemnity of approaching evening—was almost too much and sometimes quite overcame me."

But Whitefield was anxious to return to America, and wrote to John Wesley and entreated him to carry on the work which he had begun at Bristol. Wesley agreed, as we have seen, to come to Bristol, and immediately left London. When he came to Bristol he met in Religious Society meetings those who desired to search more fervently for light. He hesitated to preach in the open air. When expounding to "The Society" the Sermon on the Mount he notes "that here is one pretty remarkable precedent of field preaching, though I suppose there were churches at that time also." The appeal of the needs of the outcasts became irresistible to him, and he therefore decided to preach in the open air. He writes in his *Journal*, under date of April 2, 1739: "At four in the afternoon I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city to about three thousand people." On May 24, 1738, at about a quarter to nine in the evening, his heart was strangely warmed, and at four in the afternoon on April 2, 1739, he preached in the open air. These time references are intimately related. There would have been no open-air preaching by Wesley had his heart not been strangely warmed. It is true that Wesley had preached in the open air before, for he preached on board the *Simmonds* when *en route* for Georgia, and also in Georgia itself. But there the circumstances were quite different, for there were no churches

in which to preach. The Bristol experience was something quite new and unexpected to him, and struck right across his prejudices and his old sense of decorum and order. He tells us his thoughts and feelings in his *Journal* (March 31, 1739): "In the evening I reached Bristol and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday, having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in Church." In the words, "having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order", we see how aware he is of the revolutionary change which has come to him. The significant words are, "till very lately." The old way of life is at an end; he is no longer a slave to the past, although he is never independent of it: but life and life's needs are the deciding factors for his future ministry.

It has often been pointed out, and rightly, that Wesley was a religious pragmatist. His test question is now no longer, "What does antiquity teach?" but rather, "How can we best serve the present age?" He is ever asking himself what are the best ways and the swiftest means of telling the people the gospel of the love of Jesus. As we follow his story we see that methods which were dear to him, and which were hoary with antiquity, had to be rejected because he saw that there were new ways and better by which to reach the people. Wesley was, by training and temperament, a conservative in questions of Church government; by the call of his Nonconforming ancestry and by the

illumination of a new experience he became slowly but yet surely a fearless progressive and the herald of new ways and of new organizations. But he was never a revolutionary. He did not destroy the old system and then sit down to plan a new one. He took a step at a time and answered problems not theoretically, but as the need arose and the occasion demanded a solution. As we watch the growth of Methodism we realize that it started in the hearts of a few men to whom had come a glowing experience which was communicable to others. There was something infectious in their realization of spiritual reality, and soon they gathered about them a company of like-minded souls aglow with the same experience. These met together and became a new centre of evangelical activity. The work grew with surprising rapidity, and Wesley, who was not only a great preacher, organized as occasion demanded, and this gave cohesiveness and permanence to his work.

Wesley had always this characteristic; he ever saw the need to conserve the results of his labours, and thus his army not only gained in numbers but in discipline and in fighting power. He never was as great an orator as Whitefield, and always realized the great importance of his friend's work; but he brought to the task of reforming England those practical gifts which God had not given to his fellow-worker. Wesley, having started to preach in the open air, found in it one of the great means of proclaiming the Gospel to the people. He commenced this work on April 2, 1739—a few hours afterwards we see him expounding the Acts of the Apostles to a Society meeting in Baldwin Street. It was by these two ways that he did his great work. His work is both extensive and intensive. He awakens the people

by his open-air preaching, but never leaves them without shepherding them in Society gatherings. He knows that it is not enough to awaken men out of their sleep, but that he must also teach and instruct them in the truths of the Gospel. He declined to preach in a town in Ireland, although invited by the mayor, for he says : " I had little hope of preaching in a place where I could preach but once." He desired continuity in his work, and therefore preached and then explained the work of a Methodist Society : " After preaching I explained the nature of a Methodist Society."

He was a great pastor as well as a great preacher, and that is the secret of his work ; he believed in the twofold cord which could not be broken. If we watch him carefully in the early days after his first preaching in the open air, we see clearly that he calls men to repentance and also instructs them as to holiness of life. On April 4th he writes : " At Baptist Mills (a sort of a suburb of a village about half a mile from Bristol) I offered the grace of God to about fifteen hundred persons from these words : " I will heal their backsliding ; I will love them freely." In the evening three women agreed to meet together weekly with the same intention as those at London, viz. " to confess their faults one to another and pray one for another that they may be healed. At eight four men agreed to meet in pursuance of the same design. How dare any man deny this to be (as to the substance of it) a means of grace ordained by God." No one can read these few pages of the *Journal* of April 1739 without realizing that the campaign has begun. The pages are vibrant with the sound of battle. He has already put into practice that maxim which he fashioned later : " I am

more and more convinced that the devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half-awakened and then left to themselves to fall asleep again. Therefore I determined, by the grace of God, not to strike one stroke in any place where I cannot follow the blow." (March 13, 1743.)

Wesley had the instinct of a great commander and a fine sense of strategy, the rapidity of movement of a cavalry leader, and also the patience of an infantry commander. He was far too great a soldier to consult his own tastes or to be governed by them; he was waging war, and his object was—Victory. We know that he shrank from the task of open-air preaching, and that it ran counter to his tastes, but he sought not his own will—"I love, indeed, to preach in a church, but God can work wherever it pleaseth Him." His field preaching gave to him a new sense of values, for he had felt the hush and awe of these services and knew God was in them: "I wonder at those who talk so loud of the indecency of field preaching. The highest indecency is in St. Paul's Church (i.e. Cathedral) when a considerable number of the congregation are asleep, or talking, or looking about, not minding a word the preacher says. On the other hand, there is the highest decency in a churchyard or field, when the whole congregation behave and look as if they saw the Judge of all and heard Him speaking from Heaven."

## CHAPTER IV

## THE WORLD IS MY PARISH

JOHN WESLEY had, indeed, heard the words, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee." "He went out knowing not whither he went." There was for him no charted map, but there was the Divine guidance. He is an illustration of the truth of the words of Cromwell that "we never mount so high as when we know not whither we are going". He had left the territory of his old experience and ideals, and sought a city which hath foundations whose Builder and Maker is God. He realized that by preaching in the open air he could best reach the hungry and unshepherded sheep. This new weapon which God had put into his hand Wesley used through all the long years of his ministry, and always looked upon it as one of the best in his armoury. He handled it with great skill, but often sighed for another. The *Journal* contains many passages which show that this kind of work was irksome to Wesley and that his spirit shrank from it. But herein is one of the greatest features in Wesley's character—he never allowed his personal feelings to stand in the way of his great task. "I preached abroad to twice the people we should have had at the house. What marvel the devil does not

love field preaching! Neither do I: I love the commodious room, a soft cushion, a handsome pulpit." In later years he wrote: "To this day field preaching is a cross to me. But I know my commission, and see no other way of preaching the Gospel to every creature." John Wesley felt that the very life and triumph of Methodism was dependent upon field preaching. "The house was well filled; but I expect small increase of the work of God till we preach abroad." The open-air preaching was to Wesley the symbol of aggressive work; it spoke of the yearning which was within his heart to reach the people, and he did not hesitate to say that when field preaching ceased to be Methodism would cease to exist. "It is field preaching which does the execution still; for usefulness there is none comparable to it." (October 10, 1756.) With very few exceptions the Churches were closed against him, and there remained only two ways of doing his work—the preaching in the open air and meeting the members in the Society meetings. Wesley soon realized that his call was no local one, but that it was universal. James Hervey (an old member of "The Holy Club" and the author of *Meditations among the Tombs*) wrote to John Wesley urging him to settle in his college and to refrain from interfering in the work of other people's parishes. To this letter Wesley replied in the oft-quoted words, "Suffer me to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation."

In 1739 John Wesley had an interview with Joseph Butler, then Bishop of Bristol. It is, indeed, a great

scene. Neither understood the other, and both were truly great men and noble servants of the Kingdom of God. It is clear that both the writer of *The Analogy* and the great evangelist played an extraordinary part in the fight against the materialism of the eighteenth century. Without Butler's thinking Wesley's way would not have been prepared; and without Wesley Butler's message would not have reached the people. It is true that the appeal of one was chiefly to the mind, and that the other appealed both to the mind and to the emotions; but both were needed, and the work of one was complementary to that of the other.

They failed to understand one another, and Butler was led to say, "Mr. Wesley, I will deal plain with you. I once thought you and Mr. Whitefield well-meaning men, but I cannot think so now. For I have heard more of you: matters of fact, sir. And Mr. Whitefield says in his *Journal*, 'There are promises still to be fulfilled in me.' Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Spirit is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing." To this Wesley retorted: "My Lord, for what Mr. Whitefield says, Mr. Whitefield and not I is accountable. I pretend to no extraordinary revelations or gifts of the Holy Ghost: none but what every Christian may receive, and ought to expect and pray for." In answer to Butler's words, "You have no business here; you are not commissioned to preach in this diocese, therefore I advise you to go hence", Wesley made the proud reply, "My Lord, my business on earth is to do what good I can. Wherever, therefore, I think I can do most good, there must I stay, as long as I think so. At present I think I can do most good here therefore

here I stay. As to my preaching here, a dispensation of the Gospel is committed to me, and woe is me if I preach not the Gospel wherever I am in the habitable world." Although Wesley, after his heart was strangely warmed, speedily realized his world commission, it is interesting to note that he is in no wild hurry to extend his work. He moves step by step, and like a skilled military leader consolidates his bases of operation. He has now two centres, London and Bristol.

As we follow Wesley's story as told in the *Journal*, we note that from Bristol as his centre he preached at Kingswood, Clifton, Bath, etc. It was while preaching at Bath that he encountered Beau Nash, the Master of Ceremonies in that city, and was rudely interrupted by him. Beau Nash asked Wesley by what authority he did these things; to which Wesley retorted, "By the authority of Jesus Christ, conveyed to me by the (now) Archbishop of Canterbury when he laid hands upon me and said, 'Take thou authority to preach the Gospel'." Beau Nash returned again to the fray, and said, "Besides, your preaching frightens people out of their wits." "Sir, did you ever hear me preach?" "No." "How, then, can you judge of what you have never heard?" "Sir, by common report." "Common report is not enough. Give me leave, sir, to ask, Is not your name Nash?" "My name is Nash." "Sir, I dare not judge of you by common report. I think it not enough to judge by." At this point an old woman in the crowd gave the final blow to the worldly interruptor. "Sir," said she, "leave him to me; let an old woman answer him. You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body; we take care of our souls; and for the good of our souls we come here." Wesley tells this story in his *Journal*, and after

recording the words of the old woman closes the scene by saying, "He replied not a word but walked away." Beau Nash, with his white hat and his laced coat, walked away as the Master of Ceremonies, but he was not the master of that encounter with John Wesley.

The work grew so rapidly at Bristol that it became necessary to make arrangements to house those who had been awakened. Wesley writes: "We took possession of a piece of ground near St. James's Church, in the Horsefair, where it was designed to build a room, large enough to contain both the Societies of Nicholson and Baldwin Streets, and such of their acquaintance as might desire to be present with them, at such times as the Scripture was expounded." This building has been spoken of as the first Methodist preaching-house erected; but that is rather misleading. The house when first built was not intended for preaching purposes, but to give shelter to the two Religious Societies. Later it became a preaching-house, and to it preachers were then regularly appointed by Wesley and the Conference. Wesley at first did not intend to be engaged personally in the work connected with this building, either as to the expense or in the direction of it. He appointed eleven feoffees, but tells us that he soon altered his mind. "I quickly found out my mistake: first with regard to expense—for the whole undertaking must have stood still had not I immediately taken upon myself the payment of all the workmen, so that before I knew where I was I had contracted a debt of more than a hundred and fifty pounds. And this I was to discharge how I could—the subscriptions of both societies not amounting to one quarter of the sum.

And as to the direction of the work, I presently received letters from my friends in London—Mr. Whitefield in particular, backed with a message by one just come from thence, that neither he nor they would have anything to do with the building, neither contribute anything towards it, unless I would instantly discharge all feoffees and do everything in my own name. Many reasons they gave for this; but one was enough, viz. that such feoffees always have it in their power to control me; and, if I preached not as they liked, to turn me out of the room I had built. I accordingly yielded to their advice, and calling all the people together, cancelled (no man opposing) the instrument made before, and took the whole management in my hands. Money, it is true, I had not, nor any human prospect or probability of procuring it; but I knew 'the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof', and in His name set out, nothing doubting." This was a most important decision, and was the method adopted in all his building operations, and the way by which he retained the control of buildings in his own hands.

On June 13, 1739, Wesley returned to London after having been absent from there since March 29th. In the eleven weeks which Wesley had been in Bristol he had waged an intensive campaign, changed the area of his activities by preaching in the open air, and had launched the great offensive against the forces of evil. He had seen strange sights and witnessed curious happenings. Southey, in his *Life of Wesley*, deals somewhat scornfully with the physical manifestations which accompanied at this stage Wesley's preaching. Wesley never encouraged these abnormalities, and set no value upon them. They have been witnessed often in times

of great revival, and occupied only a limited place in the Methodist movement. These "signs" were seen chiefly in the early days of the Revival. Wesley never laid any emphasis upon their worth, although he never sought to hide the story of these manifestations. At first they were limited to the meetings in the Society, and then later were witnessed in the open air. The opponents of Wesley had said, "Why were these things only in their private Societies? Why were they not done in the face of the sun?" Wesley records these questionings, and then writes: "To-day, Monday, May 21st, our Lord answered for Himself, for while I was enforcing these words, 'Be still, and know that I am God', He began to bare His arm, not in a closed room, neither in private, but in the open air, and before more than two thousand witnesses. One, and another, and another were struck to the earth, exceedingly trembling at the presence of His power."

These things to Wesley were the accompaniments—unasked for and unsought—of the Revival, but they were not of its essence, neither were they the sights that rejoiced his heart. He gloried in more lasting and greater results, and pointed triumphantly to the great moral changes wrought through the preaching of the Word: "I will show you him that was a lion till then and is now a lamb; him that was a drunkard and is now exemplarily sober; the whore-monger that was, who now abhors the very 'garment spotted by the flesh'. These are my living arguments for what I assert, viz. 'That God does now, as aforetime, give remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, even to us and to our children—yea, and that always suddenly, as far as I have known, and often in dreams and

visions of God'. If it be not so, I am found a false witness before God. For these things I do, and by His grace will testify." Wesley spoke according to his experience in 1739, but later, realizing that all conversions were not so sudden or so swift as he had thought, said: "When fifty years ago my brother Charles and I, in the simplicity of our hearts, told the good people of England that unless they knew their sins were forgiven they were under the wrath and curse of God, I marvel they did not stone us. The Methodists, I hope, know better now. We preach assurance, as we always did, as a common privilege of the children of God; but we do not enforce it, under the pain of damnation enforced on all who enjoy it not."

As in so many other questions, Wesley by further experience modified his opinion. He was not afraid of inconsistency, for he was ever learning; and he would have agreed that there is a consistency which is the punishment of timid minds. While John Wesley had been absent from London his brother Charles seems to have been in charge of the Fetter Lane Society. During this time strange influences had been working in the Society, for some of its members were anxious to sever its connexion with the Church of England. Charles Wesley, who was ever a most loyal Churchman, did all that he could to resist this new spirit. He took regularly all who were loyal to the original intention of the Society to the Sacrament at St. Paul's. He was greatly troubled by those in the Society who asserted that the laity had the right to baptize and to administer the Lord's Supper. The chief spokesman of this view was a man called Shaw, and Charles Wesley soon gave him to understand that if the controversy continued

either he or Shaw must leave the Society. The Fetter Lane Society had also been troubled by the influence of the work of the French prophets, whose views of inspiration and illumination led to much disorder. Although Charles Wesley was about this time shut out from preaching at Islington Parish Church, neither this nor the disorder at Fetter Lane could quench his ardour. He went with Whitefield to Moorfields, Kennington Common, and Blackheath, where he stood by him as he preached to great multitudes. Charles Wesley says that "he scrupled preaching in another's parish till he had been refused the Church". When the incumbents refused him the use of their pulpits, he preached in the open air. On June 13th John Wesley returned to London, and with characteristic promptness at once sought to bring peace to the troubled Society in Fetter Lane. Shaw and an associate of his were expelled from the Society "because they disowned themselves members of the Church of England". George Whitefield, in his *Journal*, May 20, 1739, writes: "Went with our brethren of the Fetter Lane Society to St. Paul's, and received the Holy Sacrament, as testimony that we adhered to the Church of England." Dr. J. S. Simon rightly says: "The popular theory that, from the first, the Society in Fetter Lane was Moravian is quite untenable."

Although John Wesley was able for some time to keep the Society true to its original intention, the final break was not long delayed. Before this event happened John Wesley had begun his great open-air campaign in London, preaching at Blackheath and Upper Moorfields to enormous crowds. It was in the natural order that the Wesleys should part from the Religious

Societies, whose members had not the wide vision or the campaigning spirit of the Methodists, and their continued association with them would have hampered the Wesleys in their endeavours. On November 11th Wesley preached in the Foundery. He tells us that "two gentlemen came and desired me once and again to preach in a place called the Foundery, near Moorfields. With much reluctance I at length complied." Shortly after this, Wesley purchased the lease of this place. It was a heap of ruins where the King's cannons used to be cast. It had been wrecked by an explosion in 1716, and the Royal foundry had been removed to Woolwich. For over twenty years the "Old Foundery" had been in ruins. It soon became the home of the Methodist Societies. This is shadowed forth in a passage in the *Journal* under the date December 24, 1739:

"In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to me in London who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work I appointed a day when they might all come together. This was the rise of the United Society, first in London and then in other places. Such a Society is none other than "a company of men, having the form and seeking the power of godliness; united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation".

Dr. Simon writes of this first meeting of the new Society: "As to the place of the first meeting it can only be conjectured; but it is indisputable that, in the opening months of 1740, a Society under the control of John Wesley, and distinct from the Fetter Lane Society, did habitually meet in a room of the Foundery."

It can be clearly seen that this new Society was different in its conditions of membership from that of the older Religious Societies. There is only one condition of membership—that of desiring to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins. Members of any Church could join if they so desired to do. It is true that Wesley urged upon all its members to be true to the teaching of the Church of England and to partake of the Sacraments—but the rules of the Methodist Society lay down no such conditions. For some short time after the acquiring of the Foundery and of the formation of the Society there, the Wesleys kept in fellowship with the Fetter Lane Society. But the time of his breaking completely away from it was close at hand. There had developed in that Society a doctrine of "stillness". John Wesley writes in his *Journal*, February 26, 1740: "Complaint was made again (as, indeed, had been done before, and that not once nor twice only) that many of our brethren, not content with leaving off the ordinances of God themselves, were continually troubling those who did not, and disputing with them whether they would or no." Many of the members of the Fetter Lane Society were teaching that ordinances were of no value—that the Sacrament should be neglected, that the Scriptures need not be read. They had been taught this strange

teaching by Molther, who was introduced to the Society at Fetter Lane by James Hutton. His ministry was endorsed by Count Zinzendorf, and he had close connexions with the pietism of Halle and Hernhuth. This type of teaching was anathema to the Wesleys, and on seeing that the Society would not renounce it, on Sunday, July 20, 1740, John Wesley went to Fetter Lane with Lady Huntingdon and others. He explained his views to that Society, and condemned the teaching of Molther and his party. He closed his message to them by saying:

"You have often affirmed that to search the Scriptures, to pray, or to communicate, before we have this faith, is to seek salvation by works; and that till these works are laid aside no man can receive faith.

"I believe these assertions to be flatly contrary to the Word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back to the 'Law and the Testimony'. I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn. But as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgement follow me." "I, then", says Wesley, "without saying anything more, withdrew, as did eighteen or nineteen of the Society."

On the following Wednesday they joined the Society at the Foundery. Wesley writes (July 23, 1740): "Our little company met at the Foundery instead of Fetter Lane. About twenty-five of our brethren God hath given us already, all of whom think and speak the same thing. Seven- or eight-and-forty likewise of the fifty women that were in band desired to cast in their lot with us." It is well to recall the fact that the Society

in Fetter Lane, from which the Wesleys withdrew, was a Religious Society in connexion with the Church of England. It was not until two years later that the Fetter Lane Society was formally constituted, in November 1742, into a congregation of the Moravian Church. We have here dealt with the beginnings of Methodism at some length. To understand the movement aright we must see clearly that it arose out of the Religious Societies, that it separated completely from them, and that while it retained many of the methods of those early Societies, it became an independent organization, having a full freedom and autonomy. On July 23, 1740, the Wesleys were in possession of the "Rooms" at Bristol and Kingswood and the Foundery. Wesley stumbled upon his new methods rather than planned them. He had an astonishingly quick eye to see old methods of inherent vitality, and also new ways which would further the campaign which he waged with such verve and enthusiasm. He was, indeed, like the good householder who bringeth out of his treasury things new and old. In the year 1742 (May 15th) a meeting was held at Bristol, and the question was asked, "How shall we pay the debt upon the preaching-house?" The Society in Bristol contained several sea-going captains, and one of them, Captain Foy, said: "Let every one in the Society give a penny a week, and it will be easily done." Some objected that many of the members were poor and had not a penny to spare. The captain said: "True; then put ten or twelve of them to me. Let each of these give what they can weekly, and I will supply what is wanting." Many others made the same offer. So Mr. Wesley divided the Society among them—

assigning a class of about twelve persons to each of these, who were termed leaders. Not long after one of these informed Mr. Wesley that, calling on such an one in his house, he found him quarrelling with his wife. Another was found in drink. It immediately struck into Mr. Wesley's mind, "This is the very thing we wanted. The leaders are the persons who may not only receive the contributions, but also watch over the souls of their brethren." The Society in London, being informed of this, willingly followed the example of that in Bristol—as did every Society from that time, whether in Europe or America. By this means it was easily found if any grew weary or faint, and help was speedily administered. And if any walked disorderly, they were quickly discovered, and either amended or dismissed. The foregoing account was written by John Wesley in 1786, in a short pamphlet entitled *Thoughts on Methodism*. It shows us that out of a merely financial plan arose the central spiritual method of the Methodist Societies—the Class Meeting.

Whitefield, in the later years of his ministry, realized that John Wesley had been able, by means of the Class Meeting, to do what he was unable to do without it. "My brother Wesley acted wisely. The souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in class, and thus preserved the fruit of his labour. This I neglected, and my people are a rope of sand." Wesley also instituted small groups (of five or six) of the more devout and trustworthy of the members of the Society, and formed them into "Bands". Dr. Simon says: "At the outset Wesley made the members of the 'Bands' his counsellors, and was accustomed to bring critical cases before them for their consideration and

advice." Thus in the early days of Methodism we see the Bands, the Classes, and the Society, which was composed of all the members who were meeting together in fellowship. He gave to the various Societies the name "The United Society". Careful lists were kept of the members, they gathered together for fellowship regularly, and the new converts were at once introduced into classes, where they were encouraged by those who had passed through the same experience of conversion, but had a longer and deeper experience of the Christian life. It seems strangely simple, and it certainly is—but its strength lay in its simplicity. There is something reminiscent about it—for it recalls to us the days of the Early Church and its primitive practice and its life of fellowship, "For they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and of prayers"; and its confession, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another."

Wesley never made a fetish of numbers, but was swift to eject from membership those who revealed a low moral standard of life, and was eager to welcome anyone who desired to know the way of life as it is in Jesus. All the readers of the *Journal* will know that such a phrase as the following occurs with great frequency—"There is a considerable increase in the Society, and not in number only." He visits the Society at Newcastle and writes: "I diligently inquired who they were that did not walk according to the Gospel: in consequence of which I was obliged to put away about forty persons." He purges the London Society of all "that did not walk according to the Gospel. By this means we reduced the number of members to less than nineteen hundred. But number

is an unconsiderable circumstance. May God increase them in faith and love!" He asked not merely for more, but rather for better Christians. His phrase "To spread Scriptural holiness throughout the land" sounds rather archaic and distant to modern ears, but he meant much by it. He saw the England of his day with its brutality, loose morals, its cock-fighting, its bear-baiting, its Gin Lane, its Tyburn, and the cruel curiosity of the pagan men and women who turned the malefactors' dying moments into a spectacle of society; he saw the Church with its lowered standard and its indifference; and he knew that he was commissioned to call men to a higher and nobler way of life, and all his energies were bent to that one end. He called to his countrymen to come out from among the unclean things and be separate. His purposes were intensely moral; he desired the faith that *works* by love. It was our privilege some time ago to meet a Swede, a doctor of philosophy, who was studying the life of Wesley and the history of Methodism, and she said that John Wesley, always suggested to her fresh, bubbling spring water; for he brought cleansing and purity wherever he went. That remark would have pleased him, for that was his life's aim and purpose, and for that end he founded the "United Society".

In 1742 the Methodist Society with its classes and leaders had come into being, and Wesley had also realized the worth of lay preachers. He came to this decision reluctantly. On hearing that Thomas Maxwell, a layman, was preaching to the "Methodist Society" in London, he hurried from Bristol to London to stop him. Meeting his mother, Wesley said: "Thomas Maxwell has turned preacher I find." To which his

mother replied: "John, you know what my sentiments have been, but take care what you do with this young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself." This Wesley did, and was fully convinced of the wisdom of his mother's judgement. Shortly afterwards Thomas Richards and Thomas Westell also became regular lay preachers. Thus by this time the main features of Methodism are clearly seen—the Classes, Leaders, Society, and Lay Preachers, who acted under the direction of John Wesley. To this was added in the year 1744 the Conference, which met for the first time at the Foundery, and has met every year since, giving to Methodism its central and governing court. At first it was entirely composed of ordained clergymen of the Church of England, but soon included some of Wesley's itinerant preachers. Thus the organization grew: it was not planned or schemed. It grew out of the soil of need and opportunity, and was watered by the Divine Spirit.

As we watch Wesley we note that he works not only with enthusiasm, but also with a fine sense of direction. We have seen that he already has two centres of work—London and Bristol. On May 18, 1742, he found a new centre for his activities, for he made his first entrance into Newcastle-on-Tyne—a city which was to be so closely identified with the rest of his life and work. He was shocked by the drunkenness and the foul language of the people. "We came to Newcastle about six, and after a short refreshment walked into the town. I was surprised; so much drunkenness, cursing, and swearing (even from the

mouths of little children) do I never remember to have seen and heard before, in so small a compass of time." In this story we look right into Wesley's mind and heart. The sheer sinfulness of the place is the triumphant argument for his coming. Its utter heathenism could not impair his faith in the victorious love of Jesus.

> Faith, mighty faith the promise sees,
> And looks to that alone;
> Laughs at impossibilities,
> And cries, It shall be done!

For Wesley was not daunted by difficulties, but rather found in them his great opportunity. He ran to meet them with the eagerness of a schoolboy who rushes out of school to the playing-fields. Looking with realistic vision upon sinful Newcastle he writes: "Surely this place is ripe for Him, who came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." That remark is utterly characteristic of Wesley. What would have led others to depart was the very thing which attracted him to the task in that place. He preached from the text, "He was wounded for our transgressions." He chose on this occasion, as was his habit, a text of great tenderness. In reading the *Journal* we realize that amongst Wesley's favourite texts, when preaching to the crowds, were, "And they having nothing to pay, He frankly forgave them both", "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters", "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners". He was a preacher of God's Love, and the tender grace which is in Christ Jesus. He sometimes thundered at the rich, but not at the poor; he was above that meanness. There is

an eager restlessness about Wesley's restfulness—he is ever seeking for new kingdoms to conquer. He makes his first sally into Wales as early as 1739, but leaves that country in the main to Howell Harris and his followers. He seeks to claim Ireland and crosses the Irish Sea forty-two times, and it is computed by Tyerman that Wesley's itineraries in Ireland occupied six years of his life. In England the pioneer of Methodism had been Moravianism, and so it was in Ireland. Amongst the early Moravian workers was one of Wesley's Kingswood workers—John Cennick, who had left the Methodists and joined the Moravians.

Wesley first landed in Ireland on August 9, 1747. He had a great love for the people of that island, and said: "For natural sweetness of temper, for courtesy and hospitality, I have never seen any people like the Irish." He sees that they are eager to receive the Word of God, but knows their peril. "The danger is that the Word should not take deep root, that it should be as seed falling on stony ground." His tours in Ireland show an amazing record of hard work, done under singularly perilous conditions. He faced risks of a fierce order: and yet was on the whole singularly well received by the Catholics, who came to hear him in large numbers as he preached in the open air. He is mindful of the wrongs which had been inflicted on the Irish Catholics, and sees how hard it is for the Protestants to win to their faith the persecuted Catholic people. He notes the methods of brutality which had so seriously hindered the progress of Protestantism in Ireland. "At least", says Wesley, "ninety-nine in a hundred of the native Irish remain in the religion of their forefathers. Nor is it any wonder that those who

are born papists generally live and die such, when the Protestants can find no better ways to convert them than penal laws and Acts of Parliament." Many of the London Methodists complained that John and Charles Wesley spent too much time in Ireland. But there is something prophetic in Wesley's words, "Be patient, and Ireland will repay you." It was from Ireland that Wesley received some of his best workers—Thomas Walsh, Adam Clarke, Henry Moore.

It was not until 1751 that Wesley first preached in Scotland. He visited it many times subsequently, and Methodist Societies were founded in many towns there. His success in that country was greatly hindered by the intense bitterness aroused by the Calvinistic controversy, and also by his inability to give to the work as much attention as he desired. Wesley's influence on religion in Scotland was greater than it appeared, for his life and work influenced the Erskines, Lady Glenorchy, Lady Maxwell, and many of the religious leaders. The full extent of his missionary labours in Scotland cannot be understood, if we only think of it in terms of Methodism. It helped to bring a new atmosphere into the Churches in Scotland, and certainly acted as a solvent of the metallic Calvinism of much of its teaching.

By the year 1751 Wesley had become an itinerant in the three Kingdoms of Great Britain, and until his passing he proclaimed therein with undiminishing zeal and with a growing tenderness

My Lord, my Love, is crucified.

## CHAPTER V

# A NEST OF SINGING BIRDS

"ONE loving heart sets another heart on fire." That saying is true of all great Revivals. They ever begin in the vivid experience of a few men. The Franciscan Movement began in the Chapel of St. Damian, where St. Francis saw the Crucified One and heard the call of the Lord; the Reformation began when Luther was climbing the Santa Scala, and heard the words, "The just shall live by faith"; the Evangelical Revival was born in the moment when John Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed. Each movement began with a theophany, and soon throbbed with the beat of song. To Francis, Luther, and Wesley, there came a musical experience. That experience is truly described by Bunyan when he tells of Christian's vision at the Cross: "Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went out singing." Prose is enough for the dull periods of religious life, but the birds must burst forth into song when the summer of love has come. The Church is songless in the writer of its discontent, but never in the happy summers of Revival. We hear the singing of birds in the Franciscan Revival. Francis was "the troubadour of God", and his followers were minstrels, and Jacopone da Todi became the chief singer. The Reformation was rich in song, and we know that then

the time of the singing of birds had come. The Evangelical Revival was full of songs and singers. Dr. Johnson spoke of the sons of Pembroke College, Oxford, who were poets, and said, "Sir, we are a nest of singing birds." We can say the same of the poets of the Methodist and Evangelical Revival. Before the coming of the Revival, Isaac Watts (1674–1748) was a forerunner, and his hymns awoke joyous echoes in the hearts of the Wesleys and their followers; Dr. Doddridge (1702–51), also a Dissenter, had sung songs which will never die. His hymn—

> O happy day which fixed my choice
> On Thee, my Saviour and my God!
> Well may this growing heart rejoice
> And tell its raptures all abroad

—is tremulous with the missionary passion of the Methodist Revival. Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge were not officially connected with the movement, but their song greatly influenced it. Both were friends of the Wesleys. On October 4, 1738, about five months after the "Aldersgate" experience, Isaac Watts, John Wesley, and Charles Wesley "walked and sang together". It is delightful to picture these three singers together; to remember that "three with a new song's measure can trample an empire down", and to wonder what they sang. Surely Isaac Watts would choose a hymn of Charles Wesley, and Charles Wesley would eagerly ask for a hymn written by Isaac Watts. We know that John Wesley had a great affection for Doddridge, and that Doddridge visited him in London, and that Wesley visited him in Northampton in 1745. John Wesley would feel quite at home with these singers, for he was

no mean singer himself. It is true that his hymns are translations, but what a translator he was! He is one of the few who contradict the rule that poems always suffer by translation. Some of his translations are as glorious as the original poems. He would, indeed, be a bold man who said that " Thou hidden love of God ", Wesley's noble translation of Tersteegen's hymn, suffers by passing into the words of another language. But to the Methodists the sweetest singer was Charles Wesley. Isaac Watts said that Charles Wesley's hymn, " Come, O thou traveller unknown ", was worth all the verses he had ever written. We appreciate the beautiful spirit which breathed in the man who said it, but we need all the great hymns of each of them, and we are thankful that the Revival's song was enriched both by " When I survey the wondrous Cross " and " Come, O thou traveller unknown ". Neither singer is greater than the other: for each is equally great. No hymn-singer is as great as either of them: they share the Poet-Laureateship of Hymnology. It is interesting to remember that John Wesley chanted at his passing a hymn, written not by his brother, but by Isaac Watts, " I'll praise my Maker, while I've breath." The lyrical note of Charles Wesley made a swift appeal to the crowds who listened to the Wesleys, and the battle was won both by speech and song, but chiefly by song.

The range of Charles Wesley's hymns is astonishing. He wrote hymns for the open-air crowds. " All ye that pass by, To Jesus draw nigh ", gave us the great festival hymns of the Church, and composed hymns for the many states and stages of the religious life. He is credited with some 6,500 religious poetical compositions. It is not by the many hymns that he lives, but rather

by those which are to-day the common property of all the Churches; by his great hymns of the festivals of the Church, by "Jesu, Lover of my Soul", "Come, Holy Ghost all-quickening fire", "Earth, rejoice, the Lord is King", that lovely lyric, "Christ, whose glory fills the skies", and by many others, such as "O for a thousand tongues to sing", "Soldiers of Christ, arise", "Love Divine all loves excelling", "O Love Divine how sweet Thou art". The hymn-book of the Wesleys became the prayer-book, the campaigner's song manual, and the interpreter of the spiritual experience of the early Methodists. Its mysticism dominated their spiritual life, its theology shaped their thinking, its exultations thrilled their souls. It gave to simple men and women the vision of the open heavens; it crowned them with a new sense of dignity: it deepened their longings and widened life's horizons. It is lovely to see the Kingswood and Newcastle miners with their scanty pittance, and the farm labourers of Lincolnshire, with their wages of a few shillings a week, fling back their heads with divine defiance and sing:

> On all the grov'ling kings of earth
> With pity we look down;
> And claim in virtue of our birth
> A never-fading crown.

The rapture, the inexpressible joy, the ecstasy of the early Methodists, can still be felt by those who catch the strains of the eighteen-century singers as they sang,

> My God, I am Thine;
> What a comfort divine,
> What a blessing to know that my Jesus is mine!

In the heavenly Lamb
Thrice happy I am,
And my heart it doth dance at the sound
of His name.

If Robert Southey had studied the hymn-book as carefully as he noted the cases of abnormal excitement in the early days of the Revival, he would have drawn nearer to the heart of the true meaning of Methodism. These things are musically and spiritually discerned. Southey's *Life of Wesley* is an excellent biography, and we owe much to him. But in certain sections of the book we realize there is point in the story which J. H. Shorthouse, the author of *John Inglesant*, tells approvingly in one of his letters of a certain Wesleyan Methodist minister, who said of Southey's *Life of Wesley*, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." Southey certainly did not understand the song of Methodism, and so could not fully understand its story. Its song is the expression of its experience, and that experience can only be unlocked by the key of its song. It is only those who have heard its thrilling song who can dance to its music. There is a story of Björnson, who wrote the Norwegian National Anthem, which tells that the people of his town, being angry with him, marched singing his song to his house, and smashed the windows; Björnson said: "You smash my windows, but you go on singing my song." The Methodists had many foes, they suffered all kinds of persecution, their houses were wrecked, their windows were smashed, their bodies were mauled—but the country went on singing their song, and will so sing to the crack of doom and beyond. That is Charles Wesley's great triumph. We believe that the early notes of the Romantic Revival

in poetry are heard in the songs of Charles Wesley. There is as wide a difference betwixt the rhymed couplets of Pope and Charles Wesley's lyrical songs as there is betwixt Pope and Wordsworth. This may be to some a heresy, but a well-known Oxford don pointed it out to us some years ago, and we believe that it is true. Charles Wesley was—what all too few hymn-writers have been—a lyrical poet.

> In a rapture of joy
> My life I employ
> The God of my life to proclaim;
> 'Tis worth living for, this,
> To administer bliss
> And salvation in Jesus' name.
>
> My remnant of days,
> I spend in His praise,
> Who died the whole world to redeem,
> Be they many or few,
> My days are His due,
> And they all are devoted to Him.

It is surely impossible to say these words without feeling their music, their dance, their tingling vitality. We catch the lyrical note in a hymn dear to the early Methodists, written not by Charles Wesley but by Isaac Watts:

> In darkest shades, if Thou appear,
> My dawning is begun;
> Thou art my soul's bright morning star,
> And Thou my rising sun.

We never read or sing those words without recalling that fairest of all love-scenes, where Miranda says to Ferdinand, doomed to carry the too heavy burden of

logs, "You look wearily"; to which Ferdinand swiftly replies:

> No, noble mistress, 'tis fresh morning with me
> When you are by at night.

The early Methodists did not know their Shakespeare, but they realized that Divine Love which gives dawn to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. We can rightly say that the Methodists sang because they had an experience and sang themselves into a deeper experience. It is impossible to overestimate the power of the revival hymns. Mr. Dimond, in his most suggestive and interesting book, *The Psychology of the Methodist Revival*, writes: "Consider, for example, the revival value of these verses sung by a great congregation.

> For you and for me
> He prayed on the tree:
> The prayer is accepted, the sinner is free.
> That sinner am I,
> Who on Jesus rely,
> And come for the pardon God cannot deny.

The dramatic passage from the second to the first person identifies the poet with the audience, and by a perfect combination of suggestion and auto-suggestion the hymn conveyed from one individual to another an immediate and vital experience."

Charles Wesley said that he did not believe that the devil should have all the best tunes, and so he took some of the popular airs of his day and wedded them to his hymns. Rev. F. L. Wiseman says: "Even popular secular verse is used and turned to good account by Charles Wesley. The verse 'He comes, He comes,

the Judge severe' is a loose parody of Carey's patriotic song, 'He comes, He comes, the hero comes', and conceivably was written in order to give opportunity to sing at the Methodist services the stirring melody to which the original was set. At any rate, to that melody it was, and in some parts still is, sung. . . . The story of how, in order to win some sailors who were boisterously singing a popular music-hall ditty called *Nancy Dawson*, Charles Wesley wrote words to its strain, is well known."

In the England of the Wesleys many sang the songs from *The Beggars' Opera* and from *Polly*, but not so many as sang the hymns of the Revival, and in not so many places. The number of hymn-writers in the Methodist and Evangelical Revival is amazing, and the permanence of much of its song is a remarkable fact; for the songs tell not only of Watts, Doddridge, Charles Wesley, but of many more. Edward Perronet, the son of that Vincent Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham, Kent, whom Charles Wesley called "The Archbishop of Methodism", wrote "All hail the power of Jesu's name". Toplady, who was a staunch Calvinist and a leader in the Evangelical Revival, wrote "Rock of Ages, cleft for me". John Cennick, who was for a time a schoolmaster at Wesley's school at Kingswood, wrote that lovely lyrical evening hymn "Ere I sleep for every favour" and "Thou great Redeemer, dying Lamb". Thomas Olivers, untutored though he was, sang that hymn of majestic dignity, "The God of Abraham praise". In 1776 "The Olney Hymns", written by William Cowper and John Newton, gave one of the richest gifts of hymns ever given to the Christian Church. It was produced late in the Revival, but

springs from the same source as the hymns of the Wesleys. We can, indeed, rightly say that the Evangelical Revival speaks of a nest of singing birds. The minds and emotions of men had been deeply stirred; visions had been seen vividly; Love had unsealed the fountains of song. If the Churches left out of their hymn-books all the hymns written by the children of the Methodist and Evangelical Revival, they would, indeed, be impoverished. What an astonishing list of singers and what great singers they are—Watts, Doddridge, John and Charles Wesley, Toplady, John Newton, William Cowper! The Revival brought hymn-singing into the churches, produced hymn-books, and enriched for ever the hymnology of the Church.

Hymn-singing is a child of the Evangelical Revival, for until the rise of Methodism it was unknown in the churches of England. Under the influence of Geneva the Established Church sanctioned the use of the metrical psalms. Early in the eighteenth century a few dissenting Churches introduced the hymns of Watts, but this was a rare occurrence. It was the Methodist Revival that gave Watts his constituency, and it was Watts who made with Charles Wesley the greatest contribution to the song of the Church of God. Hymn-singing in the churches owes more than most people realize to the Wesleys, who sang hymns in the rectory at Epworth, sang together in the Holy Club, sang on board the *Simmonds* with the Moravians when voyaging to America, sang together when the hearts of John and Charles Wesley were strangely warmed. These two compiled hymn-books, published tune-books, and gave to a musical experience a musical expression. All the great hymns of the Revival are lifted high

above theological and ecclesiastical controversy, and are the common and priceless treasure of the Christian Church. If the Revival of the eighteenth century is to be rightly judged its songs must be remembered, for they are its noblest expression, and in many ways its greatest contribution. They defy time because they are deathless. One of the paradoxes of the movement is that, although some of its theology seems often to us schematic, distant, and foreign to the religious language of to-day, we always realize that its hymns call to us by their lilt and exuberance of joy, their music of spring, and by being so truly near to life's present needs, and because they are so peculiarly young. One of the supreme wonders of the eighteenth-century Revival is that in an age when controversy raged and the air was astir with theological din, and the child was not set in the midst, Charles Wesley strung his harp to this tune:

> Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
> Look upon a little child,
> Pity my simplicity,
> Suffer me to come to Thee.
>
> Fain I would to Thee be brought;
> Gracious Lord, forbid it not;
> In the kingdom of Thy grace,
> Give a little child a place.

That song can stand without fear beside William Blake's "Little Lamb, who made thee?" and would feel quite at home in his "Songs of Innocence".

The experimental theology and true mysticism of Methodism is best revealed in its hymn-book, and its influence has been felt in all the Churches, for

many of its hymns are sung by them all. The book has found its way into many other homes than those of Methodism. Mary Benson used to call it "The dear Methodist hymn-book," and James Martineau said of it: "After the Scriptures the Methodist hymn-book appears to me the grandest instrument of popular religious culture that Christianity has ever produced." It is largely the gift of Charles Wesley, whose character cannot be more highly appraised than in his obituary notice written by his brother John: "His least praise was his talent for poetry; although Dr. Watts did not scruple to say that that single poem, 'Wrestling Jacob,' was worth all the verses he himself had written."

## CHAPTER VI

## WESLEY'S THEOLOGY

WE shall never understand Wesley aright if we think of him as a "study" or systematic theologian. Dean Inge has written of St. Paul that he was "a man much nearer to George Fox or John Wesley than to Origen or Calvin; the greatest of missionaries and pioneers and only incidentally a great theologian". Wesley also was first and foremost a missionary and a pioneer. His theology was not static. As his experience of God deepened his theology grew. His appeal was to experience; he heeded not tradition if it contradicted experience. His theology was the theology of experience —personal experience which was preserved from wild individualism, because it was confirmed by the Scriptures and the experience of the saints. There is meaning in the "we" in these lines:

> What *we* have felt and seen
> With confidence *we* tell,
> And publish to the sons of men
> The signs infallible.

The experience of the lonely vigil was corrected and confirmed by conversations in the Society classes. Great spiritual awakenings often come not by the discovery of new truths, but by the vivid remembrance

of forgotten or half-emphasized truths. The Franciscan Revival was fresh and young in its message, but it preached no new truth. It called men to the "Tremendous Lover", and made them happy in the love of Jesus. It was new in that it was fresh, but not in that it was novel. The men of Assisi could rightly have said of the message of Francis, "What is this? A *fresh* teaching!" The Lutheran Revival did not discover any new Truth; it reaffirmed a neglected one. It gave back lustre to a truth which was overlaid with the dust of forgetfulness. It recalled men to a great primitive and liberating idea. It was thus also with Methodism. It talked about its distinctive doctrines, but they are all New Testament doctrines. Wesley and the early Methodist teachers certainly believed that their doctrines were not novelties but rather reaffirmations. They called men back to primitive times, to the purity of Scriptural teaching and life. They did not disregard the long line of tradition, but found in it many suggestions for the better ordering of life. But their real appeal was to Scripture, Reason, Experience. Most of the so-called Methodist doctrines are now no longer the monopoly of Methodism, but are taught by all the Churches.

We can best understand the core of Methodist theology by considering the teaching of Wesley. He preached the great central truths of Christianity, and yet his message sounded new to his age. He preached, as he said, according to the articles and homilies of the Church of England. In this brief summary of Wesley's theology we dwell upon his distinctive message, but that obviously does not cover the whole of his theology. He was loyal to the general theological teaching of the Church of

England, and was not an adventurous, speculative theologian, but a preacher of vital and experimental theology, of the great doctrines of grace. His message was new, for Truth is in nuance and emphasis, and often depends upon the position and order in which you place it. It is true that the Church of England in the eighteenth century would have assented to the truth that God for Christ's sake forgives sin, but only as a drowsy, half-asleep person says "Yes" to a questioner. Dr. Drummond (Archbishop of York) told the Rev. Mr. Conyers "that he would be better employed preaching the morality of Socrates than canting about the New Birth."

The teaching of the Church of England in that age was prudential and spoke of the effort made by the will rather than of the gift of God's grace; its ethics were cautious, and warned men of the danger of being righteous overmuch. In Wesley's correspondence with William Law, in which all the honours of courtesy lay with William Law, we realize that Wesley feared that Law was somewhat in peril of laying the emphasis upon what the individual could do for himself by severe self-discipline, and that too little place was given by him to the Divine powers which are given to the soul. Wesley had tried that way for thirteen years with heartbreak and without attainment. It spoke to him of "Georgia", and "Georgia" meant to him "Bondage." "Aldersgate Street" spoke to him of something altogether different; its message was: "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." "An assurance

given to me" was something entirely new to Wesley. It was not a type of experience which many in the year 1738 expected. We do not say that the knowledge of sins forgiven was known only to those who were identified with the Methodist and the Evangelical Revival, but we affirm that they alone considered it as the very centre of their experience, and that they alone sought with fiery passion that others should enter into it. We can say of the doctrine of assurance of the forgiveness of sins and of Wesley's passion in preaching it

> In his hand
> The Thing became a trumpet, whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains.

Wesley proclaimed an experience which spoke of ecstasy, of great and glorious deliverance, of the marvellous light which shone into the dark dungeon in which the sinner had lain captive. It was vivid, dramatic, revolutionary. The contrast betwixt the state of the man whose sins were forgiven and of the soul fettered in sin is shown in one of the most glorious hymns of the Revival—a hymn which is autobiographical, for Charles Wesley is telling of his own experience:

> Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
> Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
> Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
> I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
> My chains fell off, my heart was free,
> I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

It was a Pauline experience, and can only be rightly valued by those who have passed out of the struggle of the seventh of Romans into the "No condemnation" of the eighth chapter. It spoke of sins forgiven, con-

version, the new transformed nature, and the witness of the Spirit. There was nothing new in the preaching and teaching of this truth. It shines with silvery light upon many of the pages of the New Testament. It was not new in time, but it was fresh in lustre, when Wesley preached it. It spoke of the great love of Jesus, of the wondrous revelation and the sure knowledge of the forgiveness of sins. The Methodist hymnology is full of the joy of this experience.

> How happy every child of grace
> Who knows his sins forgiven!

The real compendium of Methodist theology is found not in Wesley's sermons, but in his hymn-book. Wesley, in his preface to the hymn-book published in 1779, says: "It is large enough to contain all the most important truths of our most holy religion, whether speculative or practical; yea to illustrate them all and to prove them both by Scripture and Reason. As but a small part of these hymns is of my own composing, I do not think it is inconsistent with modesty to declare that I am persuaded no such hymn-book as this has yet been published in the English language. In what other publication of the kind have you so distinct and full an account of Scriptural Christianity? Such a declaration of the heights and depths of religion, speculative and practical? So clear directions for making your calling and election sure; for perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord?"

He recommends his hymn-book as a means of "raising or quickening the spirit of devotion; of confirming faith; of enlivening hope; of kindling and increasing love to God and man. When Poetry thus

keeps its place, as the handmaid of Piety, it shall attain, not a poor perishable wreath, but a Crown that fadeth not away." It is impossible to over-emphasize the influence of the Methodist hymn-book upon the theology of Methodism. It sprang forth from the experimental theology which glowed in the hearts of Watts, John and Charles Wesley, and the mystics, and it called to the same experience in the hearts of others, bringing fire and flame. It gave more passionate fervour to those who possessed the evangelic experience, and it created it in others. It sang of firm certainty and deep mystical experiences.

> My God I know, I feel Thee mine,
> And will not quit my claim
> Till all I have is lost in Thine,
> And all renewed I am.

John Wesley, in the early days of his assurance of sins forgiven, was too eager in insisting that every one whose sins were forgiven must have an assurance of their deliverance. We know that later he doubted this, and was willing to admit that while some believers had this assurance, there were some whose sins were forgiven without it. But he always preached that sins might be forgiven in a moment, and that God's pardoning love was available for all. This is the glorious commonplace of the Church of God to-day—but it was startling, revolutionary in the eighteenth-century world. In the *Journal* (June 25, 1745) John Wesley writes: "When the preaching was ended the constable apprehended Edward Greenfield (by the warrant of Dr. Borlase), a tinner, in the forth-sixth year of his age, having a wife and seven children. Three years ago he was eminent

for cursing, swearing, drunkenness, and all manner of wickedness; but these old things had quite passed away, and he was remarkable for a quite contrary behaviour. I asked a gentleman of St. Just what objection there was to Edward Greenfield. He said: 'Why, the man is well enough in other things, but his impudence the gentlemen cannot bear. Why, sir, he says he knows his sins are forgiven.'" There is no doubt that the New Testament experience was on the side of Edward Greenfield, although Dr. Borlase, the Rector of Ludgvan and Vicar of St. Just, thought otherwise. The call of all to accept forgiveness was also a challenge to the sin of all, and meant that all were "concluded under sin." The Countess of Buckingham realized this inference when she wrote and accepted the invitation of the Countess of Huntingdon to attend her chapel at Bath. "I thank your ladyship for the information concerning the Methodist preachers; their doctrines are most repulsive and strongly tinctured with impertinence and disrespect towards their superiors, in perpetually endeavouring to level all ranks and to do away with all distinction. It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting, and I cannot but wonder that your ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding."

Wesley realized that there were perils in teaching the doctrine of Assurance, and that people might by self-suggestion obtain a false assurance and not evince their blessing by a noble and ethical life. But one of the characteristics of Wesley is that he is far too great to be deterred from preaching a truth because of its perils, for he well knew that the greater the truth the greater

its danger, and that such a doctrine as that all is faith might lead to the cessation of effort, and that "assurance" might deteriorate into hurtful pride and scornful superiority. Wesley tells us of a man who told him that the preaching of the Methodists had done more harm than good, and enlarged on the ill it might do in succeeding generations. Wesley says: "I cannot see the force of this argument. I dare not neglect the doing certain, present good, for fear of some probable ill consequence in the succeeding century." Wesley's doctrine of Assurance has been often criticized, and has, without doubt, been abused, but it is soundly ethical. It speaks of the Spirit who beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, and of the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of individuals. In a well-known hymn of the Revival we find these words:

> How can a sinner know
> His sins on earth forgiven?

The answer to that question is thus given by Charles Wesley:

> His spirit to us He gave,
> And dwells in us, we know;
> The witness in ourselves we have,
> And all its fruits we show.

The assurance of the forgiveness of sins was not mere feeling; it was a spiritual experience triumphantly witnessing itself in beauty of life. John Wesley, with his fine ethical insistence, gave to all the Methodist doctrines an ethical interpretation; he related them to life's tasks. Wesley believed that the forgiveness of sins gives an entrance into God's family; that by faith we become members of it. "Behold what manner of love the

Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God, and such we are." It was upon the Johannine side of the truth that Wesley lingered—at any rate, he interpreted justification by faith, and all the doctrines of salvation, in the language not of the law courts but of the family. It saved his theology from those legal terms which are so harsh and offensive, and gave to it tenderness and winsomeness. There is nothing more thoroughly characteristic of the message of John Wesley than this verse of his brother Charles:

> My God is reconciled,
> His pardoning voice I hear,
> He owns me for His child,
> I can no longer fear,
> With confidence I now draw nigh,
> And Father, Abba, Father! cry.

We willingly admit that there is nothing new in these doctrines of Assurance and of Adoption. But these truths then shone with a freshness which became all the more sparkling because of the background of the dull, prosaic, matter-of-fact ways of religious thought in the eighteenth century. The Methodists say: "Do we believe and preach '*Our* doctrines'?" The doctrine of Assurance would be classed under that head.

If we look for unerring consistency in John Wesley we shall be greatly disappointed. His *milieu* was life; his message the Gospel. He was not often looking at truth from the quiet of the study, but generally as he galloped along the rough roads of England, and always in the light of his tasks and of the needs of the crowds who gathered together to hear him preach. He had seen tens of thousands delivered from their sins and released from their burdens. He gathered them into Societies.

The new religious experience had given to them fiery and noble longings, and the testimony of those in the classes deepened these desires. They asked questions, such as, " Is there a fuller Experience ? " " If so, when can it be attained ? " " On what conditions can it be received ? " These early Methodists searched the Scriptures and knelt while they searched. Some of them kept long vigil in silent rooms, on hill-sides, and in the stillness of the woods. They entered into a deeper experience of God's presence, knew a great peace, and felt that the power of sin was being broken. Their spiritual life was lifted to a higher level; they had tapped the untapped sources of Divine power, and were no longer pigmies with strength impaired but mighty giants. Their experience is wonderfully described by Charles Wesley:

> I wrestle not now, but trample on sin,
> For with me art Thou, and shalt be within ;
> While stronger and stronger in Jesu's power
> I go on to conquer, till sin is no more.

Some said that they had reached that state in which sin is no more. They asserted that by faith and instantaneously they enjoyed the experience of perfect love. Wesley met, scattered all over the country, those who testified that they had entered into this experience. He cross-examined them ; watched their lives and verified their testimonies. He was of opinion that nothing brought so much blessing into the Methodist Societies as the preaching of the doctrines of Perfect Love. He never counted himself as one who had received this blessing, but felt assured that others had entered into possession of it. He rejected the words " Sinless

Perfection," but accepted the term "Christian Perfection." He showed that it might be accompanied by errors in judgement, by mistakes, but not by wilful sin. In the *Journal* (July 13, 1761) Wesley writes: "In the morning I preached on, 'Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Mr. Grimshaw (the Vicar of Haworth) told me that this perfection he firmly believed and daily prayed for—namely, the love of God and man producing all those fruits which are described in our Lord's Sermon upon the Mount." There is no doubt that this doctrine was not always stated so clearly as by John Wesley. In 1769 he writes to a correspondent and says: "By Christian Perfection I mean (1) loving God with all our heart. Do you object to this? I mean (2) a heart and life all devoted to God. Do you desire less? I mean (3) regaining the whole image of God. What objection to this? I mean (4) having all the mind that was in Christ. Is this going too far? I mean (5) walking uniformly as Christ walked. And this surely no Christian will object to. If anyone means anything more, or anything else by perfection, I have no concern with it."

Wesley stated his position succinctly and lucidly; he affirms again and again that Christian Perfection is loving God with all the heart, mind, soul and strength, and one's neighbour as oneself. There is no need to go into the story of a long controversy; it is sufficient to say that this striving after perfect love produced saints, such as the Wesleys and John Fletcher, who passionately sought for the blessing, but never claimed that he had received it: Mrs. Fletcher (formerly Mary Bosanquet), Hester Ann Rogers, Thomas Walsh, and a host of others who remain unknown, but whose names are written

in the Lamb's Book of Life. The language of this experience, which the Methodists called Sanctification and Perfect Love, is familiar to all who are interested in mysticism. It is strange that Wesley, who always waved his shillelagh when he saw the word " mysticism ", should have been himself one of the most passionate seekers of the mystic goal. The names that he and his followers gave to it are of no matter. They were seekers like Augustine, Tauler, Catherine of Genoa, and Teresa, and they trod the same mystic way. They all passed the milestones of purgation and illumination, and they moved towards the crown of spiritual experience—Union with God.

The doctrine of Christian Perfection is the goal of all true saints. It is something attained and yet unattained. It tells of the same truth of which Lady Julian wrote in the fourteenth century: " I found Him and sought Him: I had Him and I wanted Him." It speaks of heights scaled by the aid of Divine help, and of the peaks seen for the first time from the vantage-point of new attainments. It tells of the ever-receding goal. Its messages are meaningless to the self-satisfied, but not to those who say: " This one thing I do, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus." Paul felt no contradiction in speaking of himself both as perfect, and also as one who had not already attained, or were already perfect. This was the doctrine as preached by Wesley. He never spoke of an attainment which was final and could not be excelled. The saint, poet, and artist dream of perfection. It speaks to them of both attainment and glorious failure. It led Turner to strive to paint the sun; Bach to yearn to fix upon the score the music of Heaven; Keats to

long with fervent eagerness to dwell with Beauty. It is that of which William Watson sings:

> To keep in sight Perfection, and adore
> The vision, is the artist's best delight;
> His bitterest pang, that he can ne'er do more
> Than keep her long'd-for loveliness in sight.

The early Methodists found in Vision the glorious sense of attainment and cried

> 'Tis all their happiness to gaze,
> 'Tis heaven to see our Jesu's face,

and yet yearned with inexpressible longing to see Him face to face and with unbeclouded eyes. It says much for the Methodist and Evangelical Revival that it gave to so many thousands of people such passionate longing for a deeper love, such intense hungering and thirsting for God. The aspirations of the noblest in early Methodism (and by such it should be judged) were insatiable except in God:

> Nothing more can we require,
> We will covet nothing less;
> Be Thou *all* our hearts desire,
> *All* our joy, and *all* our peace.

Wesley thought of Christian Perfection as something given by God, and not as an attainment. It revealed itself in good works, but it did not come by them. It did not, as his enemies suggested, awaken the spirit of pride, but rather inspired men with a deep sense of humility. Wesley's favourite hymn speaks of his contrition,

> Depth of mercy! can there be
> Mercy still reserved for me?

We see his deep humility in his message written in 1783: "I have been wandering up and down between fifty and sixty years, endeavouring in my poor way to do a little good to my fellow-creatures. . . . But now, what have I to trust to for salvation? I can see nothing that I have done or suffered that will bear looking at. I have no other plea than this:

> I the chief of sinners am,
> But Jesus died for me."

The doctrine of Christian Perfection produced saints clothed in the most beautiful garments, for they wore the garb of humility. Wesley's theology is that of a man who viewed life from the Godward side; he had realized too poignantly the tragedy of the life of self-culture and of mere discipline. The truth had been burned into him that strength unaided is but weakness, and that the only real sufficiency is God's grace. His theology was four o'clock in the morning theology. It was given to him in this daily early-morning vigil, where he saw God and heard the crying needs of his time. It is tremulous with love, and is missionary. It was something by which Wesley lived. It gave to him in the most perilous situations perfect peace, helping him to see God's guiding hand—not only in general providence, but in what he called particular providences—in God's staying the hand of the man who sought to stone him, in saving him from hurt when his horse fell, in the swift passing of an illness, in the hushing of the storm when he was about to preach. Wesley's faith sometimes makes us smile, but there is a touch of wistfulness in our smiles, for we long to have his child-like faith, his deep intimacy with God. Sometimes while we smile

we wonder whether this man who lived so near to God might not say:

> The Lord has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;
> The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

He tested all questions by Scripture, reason, and experience—and not only by his own experience but by the experience of the saints of all the centuries and by that of those with whom he prayed and shared fellowship in the Methodist Societies all over the three kingdoms. It is not probable that any man ever lived who listened to more experiences of the saints. His theology wells up out of a rich and deep experience. We catch a glimpse of its depth when we recall what it constrained him to do. He is a great catholic, and unconsciously described himself when he wrote: "His heart is enlarged toward all mankind. . . . This is catholic or universal love. And he that hath this is of catholic spirit. For love alone gives the title to this character. Catholic love is a catholic spirit" (sermon on "Catholic Spirit"). Wesley's aspiration is revealed in the almost incredibly heroic story of his life, and we see in his *Journal* and in his letters how faithfully and closely he realized the words of the hymn of Charles Wesley:

> I would the precious time redeem,
> And longer live for this alone,
> To spend, and to be spent, for them
> Who have not yet my Saviour known;
> Fully on these my mission prove,
> And only breathe, to breathe Thy Love.

## CHAPTER VII

## SOCIAL AND THEOLOGICAL BATTLES

WESLEY'S life was one long war, which he waged with noble heroism and a fine sense of strategy. The foes were many and hydra-headed, but the magnitude of his task never daunted him. His arm never grew tired, neither was his sword ever blunted. It was an age of much brutality, in which cock-fighting and bear-baiting told of the pleasures of the people. In the pictures of Hogarth (1697–1764) we can see the age satirized, and yet also reflected. Gin Lane was doing its destructive work in reality, and was not a dream in the mind of Hogarth. As we gaze at his engravings we see the great crowds going to the "hangings" at Tyburn. We catch sight of the condemned, and we note the cold haughtiness of the Ordinary of Newgate in his coach at some distance from those who are about to die. Austin Dobson has pointed out that in the cart with the condemned is Silas Told, who was schoolmaster at Wesley's school at the Foundery, and for many years the friend of the prisoners of Newgate. Told died in 1778, and Wesley writes: "I buried what was mortal of Silas Told. For many years he attended the malefactors in Newgate, without fee or reward; and I suppose no man for this hundred years has been so successful in that melancholy office. God had given him peculiar talents for it; and he had amazing success therein. The

greatest part of those whom he attended died in peace, and many of them in the triumph of faith." Wesley tells the story of Silas Told, but with delightful modesty refrained from mentioning that the love for prisoners which was in his heart was kindled by his own preaching.

He gave to his people a yearning pity for mankind. We see this clearly revealed in the lives of many of his followers, and it is beautifully manifested in the life of that Methodist saint Sarah Peters, whose story is told by Wesley in his *Journal.* It is as lovely a story as that which tells how Catherine of Siena journeyed with the condemned nobleman to the place of execution; for Sarah Peters stayed in Newgate with those condemned to die, led them to Jesus and turned their fears to joy, rode with them in the cart to Tyburn, stood by them while they died with a triumphant faith, and gave herself for them, for she died of jail fever. She was, as Wesley says, "A lover of souls, a mother in Israel." (For the lovely story of Sarah Peters, see *Journal,* November 13, 1748.) Wesley's preaching touched men and women to fine issues, and made out of many who had lived wild and disordered lives great preachers of the love of Jesus and noble servants of their age. Dr. Watkinson once told us that Wesley was a great man who loved to live amongst little men. This is true—but it is not the whole truth. The glory of Wesley is that he lived amongst little people and made them great. He recovered large tracts of territory for God; and claimed men and women for His service. His fine ethical insistence upon the fruits of noble character led his people to renounce the habits of their neighbours, and to discover new ways of using their leisure.

The Revival did much to cleanse the land of its more brutal sports, and to make it impossible for them to continue to exist in the new moral temper of the nation's life. It lifted the life of our land to a higher level. The more we study the life of Wesley the more we realize his extraordinary many-sidedness, and the amazing way in which he touched all sides of life. Dr. Delafield, when lecturing recently upon Public Health at University College, spoke of Wesley as one of the pioneers of Public Health. He was a pioneer in that as in many social activities. Wesley's Gospel was related to all life—so he addresses "A Word to a Smuggler", "A Word to a Drunkard", "A Word to a Freeholder" (giving directions to a voter), "A Word to a Swearer", "Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions", "Thoughts upon Slavery". He writes to Lord North, the Prime Minister, in 1775, urging him to keep peace with the Americans, and asking, "Is it common sense to use force towards the Americans?" In 1784 he sends a letter to William Pitt showing how he might obtain a higher revenue through taxation, and pointing out what the nation lost through its "smuggling villains", and its distilleries, and "that scandal of the English Nation, Suicide". He writes to Lord Shelbourne protesting against exercising the militia on Sunday. He makes invasions into politics, generally wisely, sometimes foolishly, but always sincerely. We regret that, besides his letter to Lord North on keeping peace with America, Wesley later published "A Calm Address to our American Colonies"—which was a re-publication of Dr. Samuel Johnson's tract *Taxation No Tyranny*. We refer to Wesley's incursions into politics to show how closely he watched public life and how nobly he fought to cleanse and purify it. He

certainly waged war here and fought with a ceaseless persistency.

Before we deal with his theological fights we wish to speak of his most deadly and difficult battle; for it was against an invisible enemy with no fixed location, whose influence was felt everywhere in politics, in the Church, and in the social life of the people. Its political name was "Every man has his price"; its religious title was "Be not righteous overmuch" or "Be good in order to be safe". In the poetry of that age we see its poison at work—for it cast its light upon verse, and we realize that the hatred of swing and passion in the poetry of that day meant that a poem was too often built like a box rather than allowed to grow like a flower. The most hideous thing at this time was the age's hatred of enthusiasm—its *nil admirari*—its prudential morality and religion. William Watson reveals this dull, monotonous moderation when he sings of the eighteenth century in his poem "Wordsworth's Grave":

Thenceforth she but festooned the porch of things;
Apt at life's lore, incurious what life meant.
Dextrous of hand, she struck her lute's few strings,
Ignobly perfect, barrenly content.

Unflushed with ardour and unblanched with awe,
Her lips in profitless derision curled,
She saw with dull emotion—if she saw—
The vision of the glory of the world.

William Watson in those two verses has given to us a true suggestion of the tone and temper of this century. It was against this intangible foe—an atmosphere—that Wesley fought. He brought into life healthy enthu-

siasm ; through his preaching men became flushed with ardour and blanched with awe. He gave to hundreds of thousands of people the vision of the glory of the world, and made them not merely apt at life's lore but curious what life meant. We believe this was Wesley's greatest fight, and herein he gained his chiefest victory. It is difficult to describe the foe, or to show on what battle-fields Wesley fought against it. The enemy's intangibility, and his invisible incursions into life, made the attack all the more difficult ; but Wesley for fifty-three years fought with this foe, and we believe claimed the triumph. Before Wesley fought life seemed fixed ; after his great battle life has a new flexibility and noble changes come in our laws. Through the labours of Romilly (1757–1818) the hellish penal laws, whereby the death penalty was the price of petty offences, were swept away. John Howard, constrained by evangelical fervour, visited and reformed our prisons.

At the close of the eighteenth century hospitals are built and Missionary Societies founded—the campaign for the emancipation of slaves within the British Empire is launched, the Romantic Revival is filling the air with song. We do not suggest that all this was the work of the Revival—that would be a stupid claim. But we believe it produced a climate and prepared a soil so that more beautiful flowers could grow in the national garden. The work of John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, Howell Harris, Romaine, Henry Venn, John Newton, Berridge of Everton, John Nelson, brought glow, passion, and life to the people of the eighteenth century. It awoke thousands out of their sleep, and pushed back life's frontiers and widened horizons. It was so great a movement as to make it impossible for

England ever to be the same again, ever to sink down so deep into the sleep of apathy. Wesley's life was a clarion-call against indifference, and the nicely calculated less or more. This is why he gave to his preachers that laconic but so meaningful advice, "Be not nice." He brought to life's meaning a new seriousness and a sense of adventure, a fine abandon to high and great causes. He called men once again from the carefully balanced life to serve God with *all* the mind and soul and strength. In writing to Joseph Benson in 1769 he says: "When I was at Oxford I never was afraid of any but the almost Christians. If you give way to them and their prudence a hair's-breadth, you will be removed from the hope of the Gospel." In that message Wesley reveals his hatred of the "almost" and his love of the "altogether" Christian, and his lifelong protest against prudence. It is a recurring note with Wesley. Thirty years before this, in writing to the brethren at Fetter Lane, he had advised them, "Be wise, not prudent".

The warmth and enthusiasm of Wesley's message for ever dethroned—although it did not slay outright—prudential theology, prudential morality, and the hatred of the irregular and the love of the merely conventional. It is impossible to claim this as a triumph for Methodism alone. All sectarian estimates of Wesley show a misunderstanding of his moral size and spiritual greatness. The Evangelical Revival did something for the whole of England, and for the world, and for the Church Universal. The truly great saints belong to us all. To sectarianize them is to destroy their beauty. Francis of Assisi, Santa Teresa, and John Wesley are truly catholic in their life and influence, for they touched life at so many points, sweetening its bitter springs, giving to it

a deeper spaciousness for all. The Franciscans can claim Francis; the Carmelites, Santa Teresa; the Methodists, John Wesley. They may claim them, but they cannot monopolize them. Shakespeare is only really ours when we realize that he belongs to all nations; Bach only belongs to the Germans when they give him to the world; Wesley is only akin to the Methodists when we realize his kinship to all the Churches. By song, by the example of a devoted life, by preaching in market-squares and at road-ends, Wesley fought and won this great fight against the brutal materialism and the cold indifference and the barren theism of his age.

We will now tell of his three great theological fights—and how he fought them with a fierce energy and with a conquering will. The first fight was a difficult one, for he was fighting against that which was the perversion of a good.

One of the most peculiar theological problems in the life of Wesley is his seeming hatred of "Mysticism"—it is to him as the red rag to a bull. He fumes, splutters, becomes purple with rage, when he speaks of it. He calls it "a snare of the devil", and writes of "the poison of mysticism". This is seemingly passing strange, for he translated hymns suffused with mysticism; he published hymns of his brother's which at times are as full of mystic passion as the songs of a Sufi:

> Suffered no more to rove
> O'er all the world abroad,
> Arrest the prisoner of Thy Love,
> And shut me up in God.

He issued in his *Christian Library* parts of the writings of Madame Guyon, *Imitatio Christi*, and many other

of the works of great mystics. He published carefully prepared extracts from Law's *Christian Perfection* and *The Serious Call.* He wrote of *The Serious Call* that it is "A treatise which will hardly be excelled, if it be equalled, in the English tongue, either for beauty of expression or for justness and depth of thought." Yet the word "mysticism" made him fiercely angry. The reason of this is simple, even if we do not think it adequate: he saw the wreckage wrought by those who identified mysticism with the neglect of the means of grace and who used it as a cloak for the wildest extravagance and for antinomian excesses. John Wesley is astonishingly truculent when he deals with the supporters of "stillness". He fights without quarter against Peter Molther, who in the Religious Society in Fetter Lane had called the members to put away their Bibles, to cease from prayer, to absent themselves from Communion, and to deny altogether all external helps in the quest of the devout life. This "stillness" was not true mysticism but only a caricature of it—for the greatest mystics have been nourished by the means of grace and have shown a noble standard of life.

Wesley early realized that the only faith which is of value is the "faith that works by love"; and although he laid the emphasis upon faith he ever realized that faith without works is dead. Wesley, who was so assiduous in his prayer-life and his devotion to the Scriptures and his partaking of the Communion, shuddered at the teaching of all those who made light of these things, and regarded such teaching as poisonous heresy. His attack upon the Moravians was too wide-sweeping and too indiscriminate; but it is clear that in the Moravian Societies an unhealthy, luscious type of

religious devotion was too often seen, and therefore he refused to mingle with them and withdrew his followers from their company and formed the Methodist Societies. The history of the first thirty years of Methodism shows us how the plague of "stillness" spread—claiming even for a short time Charles Wesley, and later on Thomas Maxfield, and that half-mad old soldier George Bell, who created great terror in the hearts of thousands by prophesying that on February 28, 1763, the end of the world would come. Wesley writes in the *Journal* for this date: "Preaching in the evening at Spitalfields on 'Prepare to meet thy God', I largely showed the utter absurdity of the supposition that the world was to end that night. But, notwithstanding all I could say, many were afraid to go to bed, and some wandered about in the fields, being persuaded that, if the world did not end, at least London would be swallowed up by an earthquake. I went to bed at my usual time, and was fast asleep about ten o'clock." Wesley shows an astonishing balance of enthusiasm and sanity, of love of freedom and devotion to order. He wages fierce strife against all those aberrations of the wild men who separate what God hath joined together. No religious leader ever had higher ethical values: he never debased that coinage. Not even in the name of "Faith", or "the Gospel", would he commit that felony. It is this which gives meaning and point to such passages as the two following (the first is a part of a letter written by his brother Charles in 1772): "If we only join faith and works in all our preaching, we shall not fail of a blessing. But of all preaching what is usually called gospel preaching is the most useless, if not the most mischievous: a dull, yea, or lively harangue on the

sufferings of Christ, or salvation by faith, without strongly inculcating holiness. I see more and more that this naturally tends to drive holiness out of the world." That is strong language, and speaks of a man whose spirit has been wounded and who has been lashed into a spiritual fury and indignation. But the next passage is more stinging still, and is found in a letter to Miss Bishop written on October 18, 1778: "I find more profit in sermons on either good tempers or good works than in what are vulgarly called gospel sermons. The term has now become a mere cant word. I wish none of our Society would use it. It has no determinate meaning. Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal, that has neither sense nor grace, bawl out something about Christ, or his blood, or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, 'What a fine gospel sermon!' Surely the Methodists have not so learned Christ! We know no gospel without salvation from sin." Methodism was born in enthusiasm, and it was kept from the shipwreck of wild men and foolish notions by the glowing faith and ethical sanity of John Wesley.

The second great fight of Wesley was waged against Calvinism. It is not necessary for us to enter into the details of this controversy. There was a clash of swords, the noise of battle, and a hurricane of wild, whirling words. It says much for the restraint of Whitefield, and for the tolerance of John and Charles Wesley, that they remained—as Whitefield said—"a threefold cord which could not be broken". At times the rope nearly snapped —for Whitefield would preach the "irreversible decrees", and it became necessary for the Wesleys to reply directly to the message of the Calvinist preacher. But, on the whole, betwixt the Wesleys and Whitefield, good temper

and good sense prevailed. The publication of John Wesley's sermon on "Free Grace", with a hymn on "Universal Redemption" by Charles Wesley appended to it, roused Whitefield's indignation. On March 18, 1741, Wesley had an interview with Whitefield, and reports as follows: "I much approved of his plainness of speech. He told me he and I preached two different gospels, and therefore he not only would not join with me, or give me the right hand of fellowship, but was resolved publicly to preach against me and my brother." The rupture was soon healed, owing to the magnanimity of both Whitefield and the Wesleys. The story of the way in which their early affections, first kindled in their Oxford days in "The Holy Club", survived even fierce controversy is singularly beautiful. At times it seemed impossible for them to have any further dealings with one another, but love and sweet reasonableness always prevailed. This happy reconciliation was brought about by no surrender of principles, for Whitefield continued to preach the Calvinistic decrees, and the Wesleys to proclaim universal grace. They did not reply to one another, but both affirmed what they believed to be true. The Wesleys and Whitefield had one thing in common—they called on *all* men to come to the Saviour. Wesley, the preacher of free grace, and Whitefield, the herald of the decrees, preached with the same fiery insistence upon "Whosoever will may come". It is a strange world, and preachers are not mathematically consistent. The heart makes the theologian. Therefore the theology of Whitefield in the presence of a crowd was governed by tender sympathy and not by remorseless logic.

Wesley's love for Whitefield never failed. He

refused to reply to Whitefield's pamphlet, saying, "You may read Whitefield against Wesley, but not Wesley against Whitefield." Whitefield wrote on September 25, 1740, a letter to Wesley upon the subject of "election" and "reprobation". Someone printed this, and gave away copies of it at the doors of the Foundery. Wesley, hearing of this, obtained a copy of the letter, and tore it in pieces before the congregation, saying he thought Whitefield would have done the same.

Neither controversy nor time could really alienate these two great souls, and it was fitting that when Whitefield died John Wesley should preach his funeral sermon, his text being "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" This sermon of Wesley's reveals the plan upon which he had worked with Whitefield, and which had prevented there being any unhealable breach. Wesley asks, "How shall we improve this awful providence? By keeping close to the grand Scriptural doctrines which he everywhere delivered. There are many doctrines of a less essential nature with regard to which even the sincere children of God (such is the present weakness of human understanding) are and have been divided for many ages. In these we may think and let think; we may agree to disagree. But meantime let us hold fast the essentials of the faith which was once delivered to the saints, and which this champion of God so strongly insisted on at all times and in all places." It was love, and not least the early love of the Oxford days, which enabled these two men to hold such opposing opinions, and yet to remain in true unity. "Will you meet Mr. Wesley in Heaven?" said a foolish woman to George Whitefield. He replied that Wesley would be so near

to the throne, and he would be so far away, that he would not get a glimpse of Wesley. They had loved one another at Oxford, been missionaries in Georgia, and were the pioneers of open-air preaching in Bristol; they had together faced the anger of turbulent mobs at Kingswood, Moorfields, and Kennington Common, and neither in life nor death were they divided. But their work was; the Calvinists found their home in England in the organization of the Countess of Huntingdon, and in Wales, in the Societies of Howell Harris. There was much terrible recrimination and real Billingsgate controversy betwixt the Wesleys and the Calvinists, but the trouble in its fierce form never came from its leaders—neither from Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon nor from that mighty orator and magnanimous saint, Howell Harris. There were misunderstandings, words too quickly spoken, and regrettable incidents—but there was a desire betwixt all the leaders to think and to let think. Each party believed it was right—and each side was true to its doctrines, preaching them with fiery zeal and with campaigning passion.

It was here that Wesley gained one of his greatest victories; we believe that he drove Calvinism off the field and made it impossible for it to raise its head with dignity again. In this he not merely helped the Methodist Societies, but the Church of England and the Nonconformists. He was the Roland who came to the dark tower of Calvinism and blew a blast upon his horn. We believe the Wesleys more than anyone else fought and conquered once and for ever rigid Calvinism. We know how fiercely he roused the ire of the Calvinists, and that Richard and Rowland Hill and Toplady saw in him an emissary of the devil, and referred to him as " the

fox", and believed that his methods were diabolically cunning and full of trickery. The power of his attack against what they held to be so dear stirred them to passionate anger, and, devoted men as they were, they fought with frenzied fierceness; they were blinded by the dust of the arena and the thick mists of angered controversy. It is all too easy to judge. We think now less of the controversy that has ceased than of the oneness of the devotion of the fighters. The din and roar of the fierce fight is over—many of its terms which once thrilled men are cold and lifeless for ever. We realize now that the preachers both of Calvinism and of free and universal grace were devout lovers of Jesus. We think of their oneness in their song; we know that John and Charles Wesley can sing with eager yearning the hymn of Toplady "Rock of Ages, cleft for me", and that Toplady can find shelter in "Jesu, Lover of my soul"; that the Wesleys can sing the hymn written by John Cennick:

> Thou great Redeemer, dying Lamb,
> We love to hear of Thee;
> No music's like Thy charming name,
> Nor half so sweet can be.

In controversy the Calvinists and the Wesleys stood armed and opposite one another; in song they sang in chorus and were one. English theology has never been the same since the Wesleys battled against Calvinism. The emphasis has been changed—the snare is broken and the theologians and the people have escaped. The influence of the Wesleys was not confined to England and Ireland, but spread also to Wales and Scotland. It is true that Wales and Scotland were predominantly

Calvinistic in the days of the Wesleys, and for long after, but we think that the song of the Revival was the solvent which slowly, but surely, broke up the hard theology of Calvinism. This greatest of all victories of the Revival was not won in controversy, but by a tender and constant assertion of the free and pardoning love of Jesus for all. This is the *motif* of the Revival—the theme of all its preaching and experience. But it was not alone by speech that the triumph came, but rather by the great affirmations of song. It was the song of the Methodist Revival that blew down the walls of Calvinism. We have only to glance at the hymn-book to realize that the Methodists had, indeed, a universal gospel:

> Its streams the whole creation reach,
> So plenteous is the store,
> Enough for all, enough for each,
> Enough for evermore.

Calvinism had no song; it produced singers but they could not sing about Calvinism. It is impossible to become lyrical about fractions, or to sing with full-throated ease about decimal points and the limited love of God. The Calvinist singers, when they sang, were the singers of the songs of the free grace of God. The songless creed was routed by the melody and song of free grace. It was impossible to withstand the onrush of the words—all the more conquering through the repetition of the word "all" and the accent falling upon it:

> O for a trumpet voice,
> On *all* the world to call!
> To bid their hearts rejoice
> In him who died for *all*;
> For *all* my Lord was crucified,
> For *all*, for *all* my Saviour died.

The Calvinists had as their battle-cry " Some ", and were without song; the Methodists emblazoned on their banner " All ", and marched to the beat of a conquering song:

> Sent by my Lord, on you I call;
> The invitation is to *all*:
> Come *all* the world; come, sinner, thou!
> *All* things in Christ are ready now.

There was one more fierce fight which Wesley waged against a foe, to which he would give no quarter—the giant enemy of true religion—Antinomianism. It was often raising its head in the Methodist Societies, and Wesley never showed it any mercy. Methodism was born in the fires of high emotional experience, and its greatest peril was that it should rest in glowing feelings and forget the ethical demands of life. Wesley recovered the word " all " and used it to proclaim that God's love is for *all*, and that God's all-embracing love demands our ALL. It is glorious to notice that Wesley's passionate insistence on the universality of grace makes his demands for " wholeness " and " healthiness " of life all the more emphatic. Although Wesley would have said that we are saved by faith and not by works, lest any man should boast, he would also have insisted that we reveal our salvation by our works, and that faith is meaningless unless it is accompanied by a good life. As we read the *Journal* we note that Wesley insistently associated the gift of new life and the new way of life. He constantly expounded in his Societies the Sermon on the Mount. The demands he made on their members were strongly ethical, and it was no easy way of life to which Wesley called them. The following verse from one of the

hymns of Charles Wesley was the prayer of the early Methodists:

> Make us of one heart and mind,
> Courteous, pitiful, and kind,
> Lowly, meek, in thought and word,
> Altogether like our Lord.

John Wesley watched his Societies as a general watches the discipline of his army in days of war. He examined them as to their experience and as to their manner of life. He was tender towards backsliders but firm withal—as we realize in that oft-repeated staccato saying, "I will mend them or end them." Wesley had to keep a watchful eye—for the excesses of the wild men of Antinomianism broke out and threatened to do serious damage to the Societies. In the *Journal*, March 23, 1746, Wesley describes meeting with the Antinomian teachers in Birmingham, and says, "I will set down the conversation, dreadful as it was"; and then he shows how these teachers say they have a right to everything in the world, and that they are free to do anything they desire, because Christ has made them free. Wesley ends the disgusting record with the words: "Surely these are the first-born children of Satan!" He ever dealt firmly with these blasphemers, and they made comparatively few inroads into his Societies. The reason of this is obvious: Wesley guarded the gate so well with his fiery sword. He asked from his members a spiritual life conformable to the Christian profession. He made short work of those whose lives were not ethically sound: "I came to Nottingham. I had long doubted what it was which hindered the work of God here; but upon inquiry the case was plain. So many of the Society were either

triflers or disorderly walkers that the blessing of God could not rest upon them ; so I made short work, cutting off all such at a stroke, and leaving only that little handful who (as far as could be judged) were really in earnest to save their souls." It is interesting to remember that Wesley never asked from the members conformity in opinions, nor any theological test. It was possible for a Calvinist to be a member of the Methodist Societies, if he did not contend and quarrel. He showed a real spirit of toleration, and was proud of the fact that there was no persecution within the Societies for "notions and opinions". But with regard to irregularities of life Wesley always showed a noble and fierce intolerance—a great tenderness towards the sinner and burning hatred of the sin. We print here what we consider one of Wesley's most glorious letters, because it reveals his approval of the disciplining of William Shent and his tender solicitude for him. William Shent, as we can see in the letter, had been the original Methodist in Leeds, and had fallen away and was in extreme distress and poverty. We print the letter in full, for its power is cumulative. It reveals the tender, passionate, and pastoral love of Wesley the aged, for he was then in his seventy-sixth year.

To the Methodist Society at Keighley

LONDON,
*11th January*, 1779

I have a few questions which I desire may be proposed to the Society at Keighley :

Who was the occasion of the Methodist preachers first setting foot in Leeds ? William Shent.

Who received John Nelson into his house at his first coming thither ? William Shent.

Who was it that invited me and received me when I came ? William Shent.

Who was it that stood by me when I preached in the streets with the stones flying on every side? William Shent.

Who was it that bore the storm of persecution for the whole town and stemmed it at the peril of his own life? William Shent.

Whose word did God bless for many years in an eminent manner? William Shent's.

By whom were many children now in Paradise begotten in the Lord and many now alive? William Shent.

Who is he that is ready now to be broken up and turned in the street? William Shent.

And does nobody care for this? William Shent fell into sin and was publicly expelled from the Society; but must he be also starved? Must he with his grey hairs and with all his children be without a place to lay his head? Can you suffer this? Oh, tell it not in Gath! Where is gratitude? Where is compassion? Where is Christianity? Where is humanity? Where is concern for the cause of God? Who is wise among you? Who is concerned for the Gospel? Who has put on bowels of mercy? Let him arise and exert himself in this matter. You here all arise as one man and roll away the reproach. Let us set him on his feet at once. It may save both him and his family. But what we do, let it be done quickly.

There were many great letters written in the eighteenth century, but surely none more direct, more aglow with fire, more memorable through its tender remembrance, more full of yearning pity. It is possible to imagine that because Wesley was such a rigid disciplinarian he was a hard man. To think so is to mistake utterly his character. He was delightfully credulous about the repentance of members, and gave to them repeated chances of returning to the Society. Readers of his letters (we would that their number would increase, for Wesley is one of the most interesting and one of the most revealing of letter-writers) will see with what

patience and tact he dealt with the wayward and disorderly, and how tenderly he watched over them and loved them. Wesley had great fightings without—with the dull indifference of his age, with the "stillmen", with the Calvinists, and with the Antinomians; and within there were the unruly members of his Societies. He is, indeed, Mr. Valiant-for-Truth; one can hear him say: "My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, my Courage and Skill to him that can get it. My Marks and Scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His Battles who will now be my Redeemer." He waged war without fear or quarter, but it was only a small portion of his work; for he always hated controversy, and realized that it was not the main business of his life. Besides all these stern fights there was the ceaseless daily battle of winning the three kingdoms for Christ.

To all the tasks to which he was called he gave himself with an absolutely imperturbable spirit. When difficulties and troubles were swarming in upon him he wrote: "I never fret, I never repine, I am discontented at nothing." It is this temper of mind which kept him strong, and made him retain the spirit of the fighter and of the great commander. He is a great leader to the end. In 1790 (March 13th), in his eighty-seventh year, he writes: "If we do not care we shall degenerate into milk-sops. Soldiers of Christ, arise!" The secret of his imperturbability, and of his noble confidence in the midst of the fight, is to be found in that Truth which he so long believed and which he confidently affirmed in his last hours—'The best of all is God is with us."

## CHAPTER VIII

## WESLEY AND HIS HELPERS

THE Methodist and the Evangelical Revival tell of two parties which contributed to the work of each other. Wesley said of the Evangelical Clergy, "They are a rope of sand, and such they will continue"; for he realized how vain it was to desire their organized help. He knew that most of them were strong Calvinists, and that there was a great doctrinal difference betwixt himself and them. But he would have been swift to admit that those who were associated with the Evangelical Revival had helped to bring a fresh and better spiritual atmosphere to the nation. Although he found it impossible to count them as allies working with a common plan, he knew that in the great task of bringing a religious reformation to the nation they were allies in purpose and aim. Amongst the Evangelical leaders was Samuel Walker (of Truro), who was a member of an old West Country family, and was a man of great charm and brilliant conversational gifts. He had been a lover of the card-table and the dance, but became thoroughly awakened and did for Truro what Baxter had done the century before for Kidderminster. He preached the need and the blessing of conversion, and formed his converts into Societies for prayer and fellowship. He gathered nearly the whole town of

Truro to Church. It was said of Walker's days in that town: "You might fire a cannon down every street in Church-time without a chance of killing a human being."

Another Evangelical minister of note and power was Adam of Winteringham, who was for fifty years vicar of that Lincolnshire parish. He had been a careless and unawakened clergyman, and had taken Orders "more for the sake of worldly advantage than anything else". His influence was singularly powerful, and many, amongst them Henry Venn and Samuel Walker, sought his advice on spiritual problems. His arresting saying, "Hell is Truth seen too late", shows us something of the sinewy sturdiness and sanity of his Evangelicalism.

Henry Venn was another leader, who, like Thomas Adam, had been awakened by Law's *Serious Call to a Devout Life*. Surely no book meant so much in the eighteenth century to the progress of religion in England, for it stabbed broad awake the spirits of John and Charles Wesley, of Whitefield, Venn, Adam, and a host of others. Dr. Johnson said of it, "It was more than a match for me", and all who read it share in that feeling. We know that in the nineteenth century also it left its mark upon many—upon Newman, and Keble, who at Fairford, in the Cotswolds, said to Hurrell Froude: "Froude, you thought Law's *Serious Call* was a *clever book*; it seemed to me as if you had said that the Day of Judgement was a pretty sight." Venn laboured with apostolic devotion in Huddersfield. Charles Simeon said of him: "The only end for which he lived was to make all men see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

There were others of high seriousness who devoted themselves to regular parish work, and brought, wherever they went, the fire and love of the Gospel message. They objected to the Methodists working in their parishes, because they thought that there was no need for them to come where there was a truly Evangelical ministry. It is possible to emphasize so much the deadness of the Church of England in the eighteenth century as to forget that there were then in her borders, besides these preachers of Evangelical fervour and passion, many true and noble-minded souls, who by the quiet beauty of their lives helped in their own way to keep alive the soul of England. It is true that there were far too many fox-hunting and cock-fighting parsons, and that the level of the spiritual life of the Church of England was pathetically low. Readers of the *Journal* see many clergymen inciting mobs to work cruel vengeance on simple and godly Methodists. But there is another story, and one that tells us that while Wesley was galloping through the three kingdoms, and reading while he rode, the gentle and kindly Gilbert White was dwelling in his Hampshire parish of Selborne—watching the flight of the birds, observing the natural history of the seasons, and writing to his friends letters which bring to our minds the songs of birds and the smell of the hedgerows and of the flowers of Hampshire. Both men were needed, and both made their contribution in their own way. In many a country rectory lived men who, remote from town, ran their godly race, and who are often wrongly reckoned in the sweeping strictures passed on the clergy of this age. But these men did not inspire the nation to a new life, neither did they bear the brunt of the battle ; that was left to the despised

Methodists and boycotted Evangelicals. The Evangelical clergy were scantily represented in London, as everything was done to keep them out of livings in the Metropolis.

William Romaine, one of the leaders of the Evangelical party, and one of the most popular and soul-searching preachers of his day, for a long time was only allowed to hold an afternoon lecturership at St. Dunstan's. After being refused a London living for fifteen years, he was elected by the parishioners to the Rectorship of St. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe with St. Anne, Blackfriars. He was a man of great influence in his party, and his first biographer says of him : " He lived more with God than with men, and to know his real history, or the best part of it, it would be requisite to know what passed betwixt God and his soul."

The influence of the Countess of Huntingdon was considerable in keeping aflame the fire of the Revival. She sought to evangelize her own class in Society, and a strange and motley crowd gathered to what the wits called her " spiritual routs "—amongst them being " the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Cumberland, Lord North and Lord Chatham, Horace Walpole and Bubb Doddington, Lord Chesterfield and Lord Bolingbroke, the Duchess of Marlborough and Lady Suffolk ". She interested the curious, but claimed the serious. Amongst her converts was the Earl of Dartmouth, President of the Royal Society, who did much to secure livings in various parts of the country for the Evangelical clergymen.

In the later part of the eighteenth century many of the London proprietary chapels and the lecture-

ships were in the gift of Evangelical laymen, and they selected Evangelical clergymen for these positions, and thus the number and influence of Evangelical preachers spread in London. Thus the work grew; and owing to the Revival which had been first born in the hearts of Whitefield and the Wesleys, the Evangelical party became stronger not only in London, but in fashionable centres such as Bath and Cheltenham, and at Hull, owing to the influence of Joseph Milner, and at Huddersfield, through the ministery of Venn. Later, Richard Cecil, at St. John's, Bedford Row, London, and John Newton, at St. Mary's, Woolnoth, and Charles Simeon, at Cambridge, added strength to the movement.

But none of these clergymen worked as colleagues in toil with Wesley; they owed much to him, but were never true yoke-fellows. There were, however, a group of clergymen who closely associated themselves with the Methodist Revival. One of these was Charles Perronet, the Vicar of Shoreham in Kent, who was affectionately called by Charles Wesley "The Archbishop of the Methodists", and who always gave the Wesleys an eager welcome to his church, and gathered his people into classes after the Methodist fashion. Another helper of the Wesleys was John Berridge. He was Senior Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, an able scholar, and a brilliant wit. In 1755 he became Vicar of Everton, in Bedfordshire. The experience of conversion came to him with extraordinary power, and the college wit became the passionate Evangelist. He sanctified his wit, and used it and his talent of droll illustrations to reach the heart and mind of the village labourer. Berridge remained a bachelor to the

end of his life, and thought that marriage was a great hindrance to an itinerant preacher, saying that it had slackened Charles Wesley's missionary passion, and that it would have done the same for John Wesley and George Whitefield "if God in His good providence had not been pleased to send them a brace of ferrets'. Scenes of Revival were witnessed in Everton, and Berridge, travelling as an itinerant preacher, spread the flame of his message through the villages round about his parish. John Wesley often visited Berridge, and speaks with enthusiasm of him and his work. It was Berridge's method to follow the Methodist plan. "Preaching", said Berridge, "kindles the fire, but Societies nurse and keep the flame alive." He is one of the most devoted and picturesque figures of the Revival, a great but not blind admirer of Wesley. He strongly dissociated himself from Wesley when he thought that Wesley had taken action which indicated that the Methodists would separate from the Church of England. Berridge is best revealed in his epitaph, written, except the date, by his own hand:

"Here lies the earthly remains of John Berridge, late Vicar of Everton, an itinerant servant of Jesus Christ, who loved his Master and his work; and after running His errands many years, was called up to wait on Him above. Reader, art thou born again? No salvation without the new birth! I was born in sin, February 1716. Remained ignorant of my fallen state till 1730. Lived proudly on faith and works for salvation till 1754. Admitted to Everton Vicarage, 1755. Flew to Jesus alone for refuge, 1756. Fell asleep in Christ, January 22, 1793."

Even in his epitaph he still desires to plead and to call men to the New Birth. We love the omission, for there is no word about his academic distinction—Senior Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge.

Another clergyman who is for ever associated with Wesley is William Grimshaw (of Haworth). He was a man of passionate Evangelical fervour, and earnestly laboured to further the work of Methodism in the country-side between Haworth, Leeds, and Manchester. John Newton tells us in one of his letters that it was Grimshaw's custom "to leave the church, while the psalm before sermon was singing, to see if anyone were idling their time in the churchyard, the street, or the alehouse; and many of those whom he found he would drive into church before him". Grimshaw often made swift excursions into the public-house called "The Black Bull" (where many years later Branwell Brontë sat, drank, and told his neighbours bewitching stories), and dragged out men and compelled (not constrained) them to come in. There was a racy homeliness in his speech, and what to some appeared vulgar. John Newton, in defending Grimshaw's language, says: "I give my judgement on this point something in this way: that it is the best cat that catches the most mice." Grimshaw was a strange figure, calling down fire like Elijah; a rough yet tender man, dwelling on the wild Yorkshire moors, and withal clad in the robes of humility. Whitefield once congratulated the parishioners of Haworth on having Grimshaw as their minister, but did not proceed far, for Grimshaw rose and cried: "For God's sake do not speak so, I pray you do not flatter them, the greater part of them are going to hell with their eyes open." Wesley tells us of the great congregations

which gathered at Haworth. "The Church would not near contain the congregation; so after prayer I stood on a scaffold close to the church, and the congregation in the churchyard. The communicants alone nearly filled the church. In the afternoon the congregation was nearly doubled, yet most were not curious hearers, but men fearing God." Grimshaw believed that the needs of his age called for vigorous, original, and enthusiastic methods, but was a strong Churchman. "I believe", he said, "the Church of England to be the soundest, purest, most apostolic Church in the world." Canon Overton says of Grimshaw: "His last words were 'Here goes an unprofitable servant'; but if any man might have boasted that he had done profitable service in the Master's cause that man would have been William Grimshaw."

As we study the work of the apostolic Grimshaw we realize that the Holy Communion was the centre of all his activities. Though it is quite clear that the teaching of the leaders of the Methodist Revival and of the Evangelical Revival was not sacramentarian, it should be realized that in an age when the practice of communicating was so scandalously neglected it was those who had been touched by the Revival fires who gave to that feast of love a central place in the Church's worship. They knew the meaning of the Real Presence. While bishops in their charges to their clergymen were lamenting the sparse number of communicants, Wesley and the clergy who laboured with him, and the clergy of the Evangelical party, ministered to great crowds of communicants. Such passages as the following are frequent in the *Journal*: "We had twelve or thirteen hundred communicants; and the Master of the feast

was in the midst of us, as many found to their unspeakable comfort (August 5, Sunday, 1787)."

But the clergyman who was the truest yoke-fellow of the Wesleys was John Fletcher. He came to John Wesley at a time when he was in great need of the support of a clergyman who was thoroughly devoted to all the principles of Methodism. Wesley says of the advent of Fletcher: "How wonderful are the ways of God! When my bodily strength failed, and no clergyman in England was able and willing to assist me, He sent me help from the mountains of Switzerland! And a help-meet for me in every respect. Where could I have found another such?" The beauty of Fletcher's life was manifest to all, and his name is inseparably linked to the great saints of the Church of God. He devoted his hours to prayer, and to calling the people of his parish to God. He is one of the few men who, playing a prominent part in the fierce Calvinistic controversy, escaped all trace of bitterness and unholy passion. Wesley had hoped that Fletcher would be his successor, and, knowing the need for someone to carry on the work after his passing, said to him, "Thou art the man." Fletcher could in no wise consent to this, for he felt that he was not worthy of the great task. Wesley on this occasion, as on so many others, sang his Nunc Dimittis too early, for he survived Fletcher some years.

Wesley said of him: "I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles; and in all that time I never heard him speak one improper word, nor saw him do an improper action. Many exemplary men have I known, holy in heart and life, within fourscore

years; but one equal to him I have not known, one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God." Henry Venn said of Fletcher: "He was a *luminary*: a luminary did I say? He was a *sun*. I have known all the great men for these fifty years, but none like him." There is a whiteness about Fletcher like unto the whiteness of the snow-capped mountains of his own country. We were greatly impressed, when visiting Madeley, to find that Madeley still belongs to Fletcher, as truly as Siena belongs to Catherine and Assisi to Francis. There have been men as holy but none holier. Canon Overton says of him: "Never, perhaps, since the rise of Christianity has the mind which was in Christ Jesus been more faithfully copied than it was in the Vicar of Madeley. To say that he was a good Christian is saying too little. He was more than Christian; he was Christ-like." We do not wonder that Wesley saw realized in Fletcher all that he meant by "Christian perfection". Fletcher never thought that he was one who could claim the character of the perfect man. His patron, Mr. Hill (of Terne Hall), offered him the living of Dunham, "where the population was small, the income good, and the village situated in the midst of a fine sporting country". These would have been overwhelming inducements to many clergymen of the eighteenth century, but Fletcher declined this living because the income was too large and the population too small. Fletcher became Vicar of Madeley, "a rough parish full of colliers", and laboured there for twenty-five years. He was for a short time the President of the Countess of Huntingdon's College at Treveca; but the post was an honorary one, and he was not expected to be often there. The first headmaster, Benson, says

of Fletcher: "It is not possible for me to describe the veneration in which we all held him; he was revered, he was loved, he was almost adored. My heart kindles while I write. Here it was that I saw, shall I say, an angel in human flesh? I should not far exceed the limit if I say so." Fletcher was asked by those in authority in the Government if any preferment would be acceptable to him. He replied: "I want nothing, but more grace." The memory of Fletcher still lingers about the story of the Revival as a sweet fragrance.

> Only the actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.

There was a small group of Church of England clergymen who stood by Wesley in days of difficulty of whom all too little is known. They were little in the public eye, but laboured with great loyalty at Wesley's Chapel in London, only occasionally going forth as itinerants. Amongst them were John Meriton, Peard Dickenson, John Richardson, James Creighton. The names of three other clerical helpers of John Wesley are interwoven with the story of Methodism—Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and Dr. Coke—and of them we speak often in the course of this history.

But the brunt of the battle was waged by the band of men whom Wesley called his helpers. They were lay itinerants; and no movement, not even the Franciscan, has ever called forth a nobler band of men. Wesley asked them to write in simple English, in the first person, the history of their lives, and their tale can be read in a series of volumes called *The Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*. These "lives" tell the story of men of apostolic zeal, and are a great and all too little known

contribution to the literature of the saints. They had the qualification of which W. B. Yeats speaks: "Literature is the child of experience always, of knowledge never." Robert Southey felt the charm of the homely and rustic strength of both the stories and the style of these autobiographies, and two of the most interesting chapters in his *Life of John Wesley* are devoted to these preachers. One was that noble soul John Nelson, a stonemason of Birstall, who, finding peace under the preaching of John Wesley, became one of his most loyal helpers. He was pressed for a soldier, and one of the crowd said to him, "Now, Nelson, where is thy God?" He made this swift answer, which tells of the extraordinary knowledge of the Bible these early preachers possessed. "I replied, 'Look in the seventh chapter of Micah, and the eighth and tenth verses.'" It is a singularly apposite quotation, and answers the question amazingly and triumphantly. He describes his passage through the City: "The streets and windows were filled with people, who shouted and huzzaed as if I had been one that had laid waste the nation. But the Lord made my brow like brass, so that I could look on them as grasshoppers, and pass through the City as if there had been none in it but God and myself." There is, indeed, a kingly dignity about this man. Although pressed to be a soldier he stated clearly that he would not on any account fight: "I shall not fight, for I cannot bow my knee before the Lord to pray for a man, and get up and kill him when I have done. I know God both hears me speak and sees me act, and I should expect the lot of a hypocrite if my actions contradicted my prayers." John Nelson was a man who brought by his heroic

labours much help to the cause of Methodism. There is more than a touch of George Fox about him, and a real, arresting dignity. He often journeyed with Wesley, and was with him in Cornwall, when they slept in the open and had for a pillow Burkitt's *Notes on the New Testament*. One morning at about three o'clock Wesley, finding his companion awake, clapped him on the side and said: "Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer; I have one whole side yet." There is no figure amongst the picture gallery of the early Methodists more arresting than Nelson. He is kingly and of the stuff of the martyrs. Mrs. Fletcher said of him: "He was an extraordinary man, for tenderness of conscience, watchfulness over his words, and especially for self-denial and rigid temperance. He made it a rule to rise out of bed at 12 o'clock, and sit up till two, for prayer and converse with God; then he slept till four, at which time he always rose."

Wesley called on the loyalty of his helpers in a remarkable degree. One of them, John Jane, summoned by Wesley from Bristol to Holyhead to accompany him to Ireland, set out on foot with only three shillings in his pocket. Wesley records his story in the *Journal*, and says: "All his clothes, linen and woollen, stockings, hat, and wig, are not thought sufficient to answer his funeral expenses, which amount to £1 17s. 3d. All the money he had was one shilling and fourpence, enough for any unmarried preacher of the Gospel to leave to his executors." Southey quotes this passage and rightly says: "Saint Francis himself might have been satisfied with such a disciple."

Another glorious itinerant was Thomas Mitchell, who, going to the village of Wrangle (ominous name!),

was brutally treated by the mob, who flung him again and again into the pond and painted him with white paint. It is an amazing story, not only of unmitigated brutality, but of astonishing Christian resignation and peace. He tells us how four men laid hold of him to cast him into the pond, and says: "For a moment I felt my flesh shrink, but it was quickly gone. I gave myself up to the Lord, and was content His will should be done." For some time, owing to blows and the fierce cruelty of the mob, he "lay senseless". But his triumph is in his final record of the story: "From the beginning to the end my mind was in perfect peace. I found no anger or resentment, but could heartily pray for my persecutors." There is an absolute abandon about this group of men. Another of these lay preachers was John Haime, the soldier Methodist, who fought at Dettingen and Fontenoy and preached in the camps. He tells us that the converts acted with great bravery and died with rejoicing. He speaks of W. Clements, who had his arm broken by a musket-ball and would not leave the battle; a second shot broke his other arm and he said: "I am as happy as I can be out of Paradise." He records of John Evans that, "having both his legs taken off by a cannon-ball, he was laid across a cannon to die, where, as long as he could speak, he was praising God with joyful lips". The Gospel was to these men the story of the amazing love of Jesus for unworthy sinners.

> Amazing love! How can it be
> That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

One of the most lyrical of the stories of these early Methodist preachers is that of John Furz. After much

struggling he entered into a glorious liberty. He says: "I sat in Heavenly places with Christ Jesus. I was in a new world. If I walked out into the open field, everything showed forth the glory of God. If I looked at the sun, my heart said: 'My God made this; not for Himself, but me. If I looked on the grass, the corn, the trees, I could not but stand and adore the goodness of God. I had real communion with God day and night. But oh! how I long for all the world to know what I know." The words of the converted Silas Kane find an echo in the experience of John Furz:

> The station brook, to my new eyes,
> Was babbling out of Paradise;
> The waters rushing with the rain
> Were singing Christ has risen again.

One of the noblest souls in this apostolic band was Thomas Walsh. He was an Irishman, and a Romanist, and became a Methodist. He was a man of passionate zeal. He preached fluently in Erse as well as English, and his preaching journeys tell of his wondrous heroism and devotion. His fiery zeal burnt up his body, and he died at the early age of twenty-nine. It was said of him that his sword was too keen for the scabbard. He was an able Hebrew and Greek scholar. Wesley said of him: "I knew a young man who was so thoroughly acquainted with the Bible that if he was questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old Testament, or any Greek word in the New Testament, he would tell, after a little pause, not only how often the one or the other occurred in the Bible, but also what it meant in every place. His name was Thomas Walsh. Such a master of Biblical

knowledge I never saw before, and never expect to see again."

Wesley gathered an extraordinary band of men around him. It is sometimes thought that they were uneducated and ignorant men; Wesley thought otherwise. He knew that they were wise in Experimental Divinity. He did all that he could to give them the educational advantages which had been denied to them before they became Methodists. The Rev. Henry Bett has shown (in the *Proceedings of the Historical Society*, December 1925) that "seldom in the world has there been a body of men who have pursued knowledge with greater ardour under discouraging circumstances". In this band of men were Dr. Adam Clarke, Joseph Benson, Joseph Sutcliffe, who each wrote a commentary on the whole of the Bible: Thomas Walsh, with his extraordinary knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek text; Henry Moore, a man of sound scholarship; Benjamin Rhodes, who wrote the hymn "My heart and voice I raise"; Thomas Olivers, the writer of that hymn of sublime majesty, "The God of Abraham praise"; John Downes, "a man of remarkable artistic and mathematical gifts."

Wesley expected his preachers to give five hours every day to reading and study. On certain occasions he gathered groups of them together, and guided them in their studies. He was their fellow-preacher, but he was still a "don", although he had long since resigned his fellowship. Wesley says of these preachers: "Learned in the one thing they know, they are not ignorant men. I trust that there is not one of them who is not able to go through such an examination in substantial, practical, experimental divinity, as few of our

candidates for Holy Orders, even in the University (I speak it with sorrow and shame and in tender love), are able to do." These men knew poverty and counted not their lives dear unto themselves. They were not "passing rich on forty pounds a year", for their salary was £12 per annum, with an allowance of £10 for a wife. They were all too rarely at home, for their circuits were wide, often comprising many counties; and the Societies and services were many and scattered abroad. They were pioneers who knew the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground, the fierce anger of mobs, and the weariness of long, toilsome journeys. They knew by experience the meaning of the message of John Wesley, their leader: "If we see God in all things, and do all for Him, everything is easy." These men of whom the world was not worthy reveal to us the story of a high service and of self-renunciation, sustained by the vision of a distant City. No Revival ever produced a more glorious or interesting group of men, and the battle could not have been won without them. They could truly have said:

Friends and loves we have none, nor wealth nor blest abode.
But the hope of the City of God at the other end of the Road.

## CHAPTER IX

## THE RISE OF AMERICAN METHODISM

IN one of Wesley's journeys in Ireland he found, in the County of Limerick, a group of Palatines, who had been exiled from their homes in Germany owing to the wars of Louis XIV. Some of these Palatines emigrated in 1760 to America and settled in New York. Amongst these were Philip Embury, who had been a local preacher in Ireland, and Barbara Heck, a young married woman and cousin to Embury. Philip Embury, and the Methodists who had come to New York with him, settled down to a life of religious inactivity. From this Philip Embury was roused by the passionate pleading of Barbara Heck, who said: "Brother Embury, you must preach to us or we shall all go to hell, and God will require our blood at your hands!" "Where shall I preach? How can I preach; for I have neither a house nor a congregation?" Barbara Heck said: "Preach in your own house and to your own company first." Thus began in 1765 the work of Methodism in America. An empty room was rented, and the fervour of the small group of Methodists and their thrilling singing attracted a goodly number of people.

A new ally soon came to them. He entered one of their services and announced himself as "Captain Thomas Webb, of the King's Service, and also a soldier

of the Cross and a spiritual son of John Wesley." Captain Webb is a most picturesque and interesting figure. He lost an eye at the siege of Louisville. At the storming of the Heights of Abraham he watched Wolfe die, and was himself wounded in the arm. John Adams, who became President of the United States, heard Webb preach, and depicts him as "one of the most eloquent men I ever heard: he reaches the imagination and touches the passions very well, and expresses himself with great propriety." The sight of this war-battered captain and the fervour of his preaching attracted large numbers of people to the services. They quickly migrated to a rigging-loft in William Street, and from there the Methodists moved to their first preaching-house in John Street. Captain Webb was largely instrumental in the erection of this preaching-house—giving £30, a third more than any other gave, and he loaned the Society £300. Thus the work started in New York.

Another Irish Methodist, Robert Strawbridge, had migrated to Maryland, and he at once built a log chapel without windows or floor, and called upon men to come to the Saviour. He was a man of passionate zeal, and knew that he had something of vital importance to say to the people. Soon Maryland (including Baltimore), Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Virginia had heard the message of Strawbridge. He was a true son of Wesley and the Revival. He was an eager herald, was touched by the fire of the Revival's message, and became a great witness of its glowing love.

In the year 1769 the Methodist Conference met in Leeds. Wesley said: "We have a pressing call from our brethren in New York, who have built a preaching-

house, to come over and help them. Who is willing to go?" Two immediately volunteered—Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor. They were given £70, and £50 of it was to be given towards the payment of the debt on the New York chapel. In two weeks they sailed, for it was the way of Wesley to make up his mind and then to act without delay. They went out to a people prepared to receive them. For the work of Jonathan Edwards in New England, even the frustrated years of Wesley in Georgia and the many journeys of George Whitefield to America had prepared the ground and scattered the seed. Whitefield generally approached America from the south (Georgia), and then travelled northwards, preaching as he journeyed. He was as well known in New England as in the south. It is interesting to note that the time betwixt Wesley's leaving Georgia and the coming of Boardman and Pilmoor to America is covered by the many journeys of Whitefield to that country. He came into Philadelphia to give his blessing to the two messengers sent by Wesley, and a few months later, at Newbury Point, he passed to his reward.

Boardman and Pilmoor landed in Philadelphia, where Captain Webb awaited them. They at once began their campaign; Boardman rode to New York and Pilmoor remained in Philadelphia—the two men changing their place of appointment every three months. The work grew, for the workers were devout; but still the visionful Captain Webb was not satisfied. He felt that the new field needed many more labourers, and that it would yield a golden harvest. The United States owes more than it can ever tell to this restless, eager captain of the British Army. He

goaded Wesley into a more immediate action, and at the Conference of 1771 Wesley called for volunteers. Five preachers answered the call. Wesley chose two of them. The work of one was not successful, but the toil of the other was apostolic and crowned with wondrous success.

When Wesley sent Francis Asbury to America he commissioned a man who became one of the greatest fashioners of that nation. As a national force he can rank with Washington and Lincoln. He rightly has an equestrian statue devoted to his memory in the City of Washington. Before going to America Asbury had been for five years an itinerant preacher, and had toiled in that office with no common zeal; but his life is inseparably intertwined with that of America. He never returned to England, but became fully dedicated to the work in that country. On his voyage to America he wrote in his *Journal*: "I will set down a few things that lie on my mind. Whither am I going? To the New World. What to do? To gain honour? No, if I know my own heart. To get money? No! I am going to live to God and to bring others to do so." Other men may have toiled as hard, endured as much, but none has toiled harder or endured more difficulties than Francis Asbury. In some ways his journeyings were more strenuous even than those of Wesley, for it was Asbury's task to pursue the pioneers over the pathless hills and the wide rivers and across the almost untrodden plains. Asbury crossed the Alleghany Mountains over sixty times. Although he carried his library in his saddle-bags, he acquired a good working knowledge of Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. From the record in his *Journal* we know that he preached 16,500 sermons.

He was a man of an extraordinary fervour of spirit, and lived a life of work saturated in prayer. No man was ever more truly worthy of the name of bishop, for he was a shepherd of souls, and for his diocese's limit he had the most distant hut of the most remote settler. He had great powers of organization and direction, and an industry which was never daunted by his physical frailties. Rarely can such a story of devotion have been revealed in a life, never can it have been excelled. Francis Asbury belongs to those of whom the world was not worthy. Millions of Methodists—his sons and daughters—have canonized him, and placed him in the hierarchy of the saints. After a short time a commission arrived from Wesley appointing Asbury as Superintendent. But this position was soon taken from him, for two more preachers were sent from England—Thomas Rankin and George Shadford. It was to George Shadford that Wesley wrote his well-known letter:

DEAR GEORGE,

The time has arrived for you to embark for America. You must go down to Bristol, where you will meet with T. Rankin, Captain Webb and his wife. I let you loose, George, on the Continent of America. Publish your message in the open face of the sun, and do all the good you can.

I am, dear George,

Yours affectionately,

JOHN WESLEY.

Rankin was an older man than Asbury, and their colleagueship was not a happy one. Wesley realized this and wrote to Rankin: "Let brothers Shadford and Asbury and you go hand in hand, and who can stand

against you? Why, you are enough, trusting in Him that loves you, to overturn America." The preachers held their first conference in 1773. Wesley, on hearing from Rankin, decided to recall Asbury, and sent forth word commanding him to return. Asbury had been sent to Norfolk, Virginia, and before Rankin could arrange for his return political difficulties arose and the days became so tumultuous that Wesley's plan could not become operative, for America was on the eve of revolution.

In 1773, the year of the landing of Rankin and Shadford, the Americans pitched the tea-chests into the harbour at Boston, and in 1776 the Americans issued their Declaration of Independence. Wesley, at first, had taken the side of the colonists, but later changed his opinion and published his *Calm Address to our American Colonies*, which was practically a reissue of Dr. Samuel Johnson's tract. Wesley's attitude to the American problem strangely complicated the work of Methodism in America. The fact that the Methodist ministers were from Great Britain, that they represented the Society of which John Wesley was the head, made their position uncommonly difficult. All the preachers left America except Asbury, who refrained from dabbling in politics, and yet, nevertheless, found it difficult to overcome the suspicions of the Americans. During the time of war sometimes he was in hiding, but through all the difficult days he lived amongst Methodists and shepherded them as much as possible. The war cut off nearly all connexion betwixt the American Methodists and those in England. This gave to Asbury freedom and the unhindered power of initiative.

In 1783 America won the fight for her freedom and the

situation became now extraordinarily dificult for Asbury. Speaking of Wesley, he says: "I am truly sorry that the venerable man ever dipped into the politics of America." These days severely taxed Asbury's tact and resolution. He was living in an atmosphere of suspicion owing to the high feelings aroused by the war, in which all Englishmen were objects of aversion. Most of the clergymen of the Anglican Church had withdrawn during the days of strife. Amongst religious leaders Asbury alone was left. The religious needs of the people were great, and there were all too few to minister to them. Most of the Methodists thought that the local ministers of their Societies should administer baptism and the Holy Communion, but they were restrained by Asbury, who advised them to wait until John Wesley had given his counsel. It was a difficult situation for Wesley. He knew of the great opportunities for work in America, and realized how imperious they were. But there were those, such as his brother Charles, who insisted that all must be done according to the rules and polity of the Church of England, and that the ordination of ministers for America must be episcopal.

Wesley had written to Bishop Lowth asking for the service of a clerical helper for the work in America, but had been refused. Wesley, in writing to Bishop Lowth, and speaking of the one whom he had suggested that the Bishop should have ordained, tells us this man knew nothing of Greek nor Latin, but was certainly called to preach. He writes: "He asked the favour of your Lordship to ordain him, that he might minister to a little flock in America. But your Lordship did not see good to ordain him; but your Lordship did see good to ordain and send to America other persons

who knew something of Greek and Latin, but knew no more of saving souls than of catching whales." Wesley soon decided that he must take swift and drastic action and ordain men for the work. It was a momentous decision, and struck right across his usage, his training, and his prejudices. But need, not custom, was ever the determining factor with Wesley. He gazed across the Atlantic and saw that "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed", and was certain that if he did not shepherd them no one would. He therefore in 1784 consulted Dr. Thomas Coke, who for the last few years had been giving great aid to the Methodist Societies, and whose services were highly valued by Wesley.

Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., had been at Jesus College, Oxford, and later was a Curate of South Petherton, Devon. In 1776, when Wesley was in Kingston, Devonshire, Coke rode over to see him. Wesley writes of that meeting with Dr. Coke: "Here I found a clergyman, Dr. Coke, late Gentleman Commoner of Jesus College in Oxford. I had much conversation with him and union then began, which, I trust, shall never end." Dr. Coke told Wesley that he was in doubt respecting the propriety of confining himself to one congregation. Wesley clasped his hands and said to Coke: "Brother, go out, go out, and preach the Gospel to all the world." Coke returned to his curacy, adopted new ways of life, and was soon dismissed by the vicar of his parish for his Methodist views. He then, in 1777, flung in his lot with the Methodists. His coming was most opportune to Wesley, for Wesley was strangely alone and needed some clerical helper of devotion and commanding personality. Whitefield had died in 1770; his brother

Charles was no longer itinerating; John Fletcher was frail and drawing near to the end of his working days. Wesley felt keenly the needs of America, and his eyes were swift to see the amazing possibilities of work in that country.

During the American War the American Methodists had increased by leaps and bounds. In 1774 their number was 2,073; in 1784 they were 14,988, showing an increase of 12,915. They had forty-six circuits and eighty-three itinerants, and also a large number of local preachers. The position of the Methodists in America was widely different from that of the English Methodists. In every town and most of the villages in England there was the parish church, to which the Methodists could go for the Sacrament; but in America, if the Methodist preachers were not allowed to administer the Sacrament, thousands of the members would have no opportunity of receiving the Communion. In 1779 the preachers in the South were ordained by the hands of the senior preachers. This was a great trouble to Asbury, and he persuaded them to suspend the administration of the Sacraments until they heard from Wesley. Asbury wrote to Wesley on March 20, 1784: "We are greatly in need of help. A minister and such preachers as you can fully recommend will be very acceptable. Without your recommendation we shall receive none." Asbury here reveals his loyalty to Wesley, and his determination to consider Wesley as the final arbiter of the conduct of the American Methodist Societies. Wesley heard the cry of Asbury, realized the great and urgent need, and saw the necessity of swift decision. He determined to act, and his action was startling and surprising for a priest of the Church of

England. Wesley's action was inspired by need rather than by fixed, unchangeable theory. He believed that bishop and presbyter were originally used to describe the same office. He had written before this date: "I firmly believe I am a Scriptural episkopos as much as any man in England or in Europe: for the uninterrupted succession, I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove."

Wesley determined to put into practice his theory of the ministry, and to separate Dr. Coke as Superintendent of the work in America. His brother Charles was angrily opposed to this action of his brother, but John Fletcher strongly supported this method of providing help for the American Methodists. Dr. Coke was, therefore, set apart by Wesley at Bristol on September 2, 1784, as Superintendent over the work in America. Wesley in this service was assisted by a clergyman of the Church of England, Rev. James Creighton. We note that Wesley used the term "Superintendent" and not "Bishop". After the appointing of Coke as Superintendent, Wesley set apart, by the imposition of hands, two preachers, Vasey and Whatcoat, to journey to America as elders. This was a strangely daring innovation, and we do not wonder that it made many of his fellow-clergymen gasp. It would appear to them shocking, scandalous, and an offence against order and ecclesiastical usage. The truth is that it was dire need that drove Wesley to this revolutionary action. Training and ecclesiastical preferences were secondary to him if they stood in the way of ministering to a great need. It is clear that Wesley did not act prudently, but we ought to remember that the goddess Prudence had no claim on his life. Early in his religious quest he tells us that he had said

farewell to all the calls of prudential consideration, and had said: "God deliver me and all that seek Him in sincerity from what the world calls Christian prudence." Wesley would have agreed with the saying of William Blake: "Prudence is a rich, ugly old maid courted by incapacity." The legalist can, no doubt, prove the illegality of the act, but the lover of souls thinks of the life which came through this act to countless numbers of those men and women who otherwise would have been robbed of the preaching of the Gospel and of the Sacraments. The real argument which substantiates the act of Wesley is the American Methodist Church, which numbers in its fold millions of members. It is well for us to recall that Wesley did not consecrate Coke a bishop. There is much truth in the remark of Dr. Whitehead: "Dr. Coke had the same right to ordain Mr. Wesley that Mr. Wesley had to ordain Dr. Coke." Wesley, however, did not ordain or consecrate Coke, but separated him for a distinct work and laid his hands upon him. It is well to remember the "letters testimonial" which Wesley gave to Coke:

"Whereas many of the people in the southern provinces of North America who desire to continue under my care, and still adhere to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, are greatly distressed for want of ministers to administer the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the usages of the same Church; and whereas there does not appear to be any other way of supplying them with ministers:

"Know all men, that I, John Wesley, think myself providentially called, at this time, to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America. And

therefore, under the protection of Almighty God and with a single eye to His glory, I have this day set apart as a Superintendent, by the imposition of my hands and prayer (being assisted by other ordained ministers), Thomas Coke, Doctor of Civil Law, a Presbyter of the Church of England, and a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work.'

It is true that Dr. Coke seems to have cared more for episcopal authority than Wesley, but it must be borne in mind that Wesley never considered that he was creating Coke a bishop. There is nothing in the story of these days which gives colour to that theory. It was a momentous action and fraught with great results. A less brave man would have been startled by the fears of what might happen in future days. In 1744 he had said at the first Conference: "I dare not omit doing what good I can while I live, for fear of evils that may follow when I am dead."

Wesley always acted on that principle. But we must also remember that, although Wesley was undeterred by the fears of remote contingencies, he did not act swiftly. He had approached the Bishop of London and had besought him to send preachers, and it was after this that he wrought a revolutionary act and ordained Whatcoat and Vasey as presbyters. It has been oftentimes asserted that Wesley's ordaining two men for the work in America was the deed of an old man whose great age had impaired the power of his judgement, and that his act of ordaining in 1784 was out of keeping with the rest of his life and was the work of a man in senile decay. But this surely is an ignorant and stupid surmise. We can trace historically the development of his mind, and prove that his ordinations were the outcome of the

thinking and the convictions of many years. We note that Wesley, in the year 1746 (January 20th), writes in his *Journal*: "I set out for Bristol. On the road I read over Lord King's *Account of the Primitive Church*. In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught; but if so, it would follow that bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order and that originally every Christian congregation was a Church independent of all others." He continued to believe in episcopal government, but viewed it as the *bene esse*, not of the *esse* of the Christian Church. He writes in 1756:

"I still believe the episcopal form of Church government to agree with the practice and writings of the Apostles; but that it is presented in Scripture I do not believe. This opinion, which I once zealously espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*. I think he has unanswerably proved that neither Christ nor His Apostles prescribe any particular form of Church government; and that the plea of Divine right for diocesan episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive Church." In 1761, in writing to a friend, he had said that Stillingfleet had fully convinced him that to believe that none but episcopal ordination was valid was an entire mistake. In 1780, in writing to his brother Charles he says: "I verily believe that I have as good a right to ordain as to administer the Lord's Supper."

It is true that his ordination of Whatcoat and Vasey was an extraordinary break-away from custom and that it marks an epoch in his action, but it reveals no break with his thought. The evening meeting in Aldersgate Street on May 24, 1738, tells us of the time and

place of his spiritual awakening, and the reading of Lord King's book on the Bristol road on January 20, 1746, tells of his new orientation in ecclesiastical questions. He never forgot what he learned in Aldersgate Street, nor the truth that flashed upon his mind while riding from London to Bristol.

It is absurd to talk about Wesley's senility; it is true that he was an old man, but nevertheless he was extraordinarily active, thinking and working as eagerly as ever. He ordained Whatcoat and Vasey on September 1, 1784. On June 28, 1784, he wrote in his *Journal*: "To-day I entered on my eighty-second year, and found myself just as strong to labour and as fit for any exercise of body and mind as I was forty years ago. I do not impute this to second causes, but to the sovereign Lord of all. I am as strong at eighty-one as I was at twenty-one. We can only say, 'The Lord reigneth! While we live, let us live to Him.'" It must also be remembered that his ordination of two men for America was not an isolated act, speaking of some passing whim or temporary breakdown in thought. When pressing need arose he governed his action by his conviction and not by custom, and ordained others to meet the special needs. He could have replied to his critics in the words of Tertullian, "We worship Truth, not Custom." If ancient order is the final test of life, Wesley was wrong. If man were made for Order, and not Order for man, there can be no defence of Wesley. But if the reverse is true, as we believe it is, Wesley was triumphantly right. It is not true that he was careless about order, but to him order belonged not to the centre, but to the circumference. He was no doctrinaire, but a man of action. Wesley saw the issue clearly:

that if he ordained ministers the Methodists in America would be able to receive the Sacraments; if he refused thousands of them would never be able to receive the bread and the wine. Realizing this he conferred not with flesh and blood, but immediately arranged to give them ministers who could administer the Sacraments. It was a momentous act, and one fraught with great results for the cause of religion.

We see in the progress of Methodism the answer to those who criticize Wesley's act; for we believe that life is more than organization, and that it must shape it and that it cannot be fashioned by it. Surely we may say of those who cavil at Wesley and complain of the precipitancy and wildness of his action, "If you wish to read Wesley's answer to your criticism consider the story since 1784 of the Methodist Church of America with its millions of members, its philanthropies, its healing ministries." Anywise Wesley's action reveals his moral fearlessness and his utter dependence upon God; for John Wesley came to his decision not relying upon whim or caprice, but by listening in silence for God's directing word, and in humble obedience to what he considered His Will. The record in the *Journal* bears witness to his noon-day confidence that he was acting rightly. September 1, 1784: "Being now clear in my own mind, I took a step which I had long weighed in my mind, and appointed Mr. Whatcoat and Mr. Vasey to go and serve the desolate sheep in America." To Charles Wesley's verse upon his action in making Dr. Coke a Superintendent he could have made a swift answer—that he had not called Coke a bishop, and that he had acted in the interest of the great needs of the work and not with a scrupulous regard to ecclesiastical

canon or precedent, and that he cared more for fruitful action than consistency.

> How easy now are bishops made
> At man or woman's whim;
> Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid,
> But who laid hands on him?

This verse, probably written by Charles Wesley, left John Wesley unshaken and unafraid, for to him presbyter and bishop spoke of one order. It was not the way of John Wesley to enter into controversy—the work at home called him. It is interesting to note the record in his private diary: "4 a.m.—Prayed and ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey." He knew full well that he was crossing the Rubicon, and that his action would anger his foes and bring much sorrow and heartache to his dearest friend and brother Charles; but he ventured all for the sake of God's work, and, having ordained these men, he marched forward into the future without fear, but with the joyous confidence that the spiritual needs of thousands in America would be ministered to by those whom he had ordained and by those who would be ordained by Dr. Coke, Asbury, and their successors. It was a guiding principle of Wesley that extraordinary situations of opportunity sometimes call for extraordinary innovations. In the presence of such occasions he never allowed his early prejudice and training to hinder him in the development of his work.

Contrary to his own inclination he had become an open-air preacher and had allowed laymen to preach, and now, for the sake of the growing demands of the work, for which the Anglican Church would make no

provisions, he had separated Coke as Superintendent and ordained ministers. It was an almost incredible act, and no one but a brave and fearless man could have done it. It speaks not of the wisdom of the scholar, but of the intrepid faith of the pioneer. On this occasion, as on all others, John Wesley showed a fine disregard of what the world would say and a glorious carelessness of his reputation. We shall never understand Wesley aright if we do not realize that although he knew the value of traditions he reverenced his conscience more, and that there was in him a real independence of judgement. He solved his problems in the silence of prayer, which he related to the throbbing, busy world outside. He was a sensitive spirit, and swift to answer the call of crying need and eager to hear God's word of command.

At a strangely tempestuous time in Wesley's life, when calumny and vituperation were being hurled against him, his brother Charles was extremely anxious that he should postpone a journey, stay in London, and defend his character by replying to a hostile publication. John Wesley was calm amidst all the calumnies, and arranged to go with his niece, Sarah Wesley, the next day to Canterbury to preach. We will let his niece, Sarah Wesley, tell the rest of the story: "I shall never forget the manner in which my father accosted my mother on his return. 'My brother,' said he, 'is an extraordinary man. I placed before him the importance of the character of a minister and the evil consequences which might result from his indifference to it, and urged him, by every relative and public motive, to answer for himself and stop the publication. His reply was: "Brother, when I devoted to God my ease, my time, my life, did I except my reputation? No! Tell Sally

I will take her to Canterbury to-morrow.'' '' This story is the explanation of all that John Wesley did; he was a dedicated spirit, and ease, time, life, and *reputation* were devoted to God. The stormy criticism which was hurled upon him because of his exercising the power of ordination, never ruffled him at all—his appeal was to his Master, and he looked back without a trace of regret to the act he had done, and blessed God for the manifest way in which He was prospering the work in America.

On November 3, 1784, Coke and his two colleagues arrived in the United States, and soon afterwards ordained Asbury as Superintendent, who by his gifts and noble service had been for some years the leader of American Methodism. The term " Superintendent " which Wesley used with reference to Coke and Asbury was soon discarded for the more familiar term " Bishop." At the close of this year a Conference of sixty ministers was held at Baltimore, and the Methodist Episcopal Church of America was founded—a Church which was destined by the blessing of God to extend all over America, and to win to itself millions of members, and to make an enormous spiritual impression on the life of that nation.

## CHAPTER X

# THE PROGRESS OF AMERICAN METHODISM

THE story of the early progress of Methodism in America is amazingly interesting. It speaks of preachers who were much in the saddle, who camped in the open air, and saw the punctual stars come out. The tale is that of the trekkings of pioneer days, and of the dashing verve of the preachers, who followed the settlers farther and farther west, and counted not their lives dear unto themselves that they might preach Christ. Francis Asbury set the glorious example of what a pioneer preacher should be. We catch the temper of this man in John Masefield's poem "The Seekers."

> We travel from dawn to dusk, till the day is past and by,
> Seeking the Holy City beyond the rim of the sky.

His energy is surprising, and there is only one explanation of it. Asbury found his strength in the quiet of prayer. His *Journal* reveals how eagerly he planned to keep time for prayer: "Having a day of rest from public exercises, I spent it in meditation and prayer and reading." He is of the fellowship of the saints, for prayer is the joy of his days. "At one time it was his practice to set aside three hours of every morning for this spiritual exercise; at another period of his life he gave himself to private prayer seven times a day;

at another time it was his habit to spend a part of every hour when awake praying!" He suffered gladly the scorn of men, for when they mocked him he had his revenge by praying for them. Asbury yearned with the yearnings of a truly hungry soul; he could never be satisfied with partial reformation of character, but desired to be perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect. We note this again and again in his *Journal*: "How greatly do I desire to die to everything which does not lead to God!" Asbury has rightly been called "The Prophet of the Long Road", and he trod it with great courage and with a deep sense of the presence of the Great Companion. He was in his prayer life, in his missionary passion, and in his holiness, of the same pattern as John Wesley. He loved his mother and father with great tenderness, but never returned to England. He writes to his mother: "If you have given me to the Lord, let it be a free-will offering, and don't grieve for me. As for me, I know what I am called to—it is to give up all." Those last words are the key to Asbury's life—he gave up *all* to Christ, and counted that sacrifice a joy. This greatest religious pioneer of America fashioned the early Methodism of America, and we rejoice it was moulded in so great a manner.

There are two pictures of Asbury that abide with us: the one is of this blacksmith boy from Staffordshire riding over the roadless prairies of America working away at the difficult study of Hebrew: "I have been employed in improving myself in tones and points, this being my horseback study." The other picture is of Asbury in his latest days—when crippled in body, but not in spirit, he is carried, at Richmond, Virginia, into the chapel and preaches his

last sermon, on March 24, 1814, seated upon a table, for he was too feeble to stand or walk. He was a sunny soul and his life was full of praise. He said: "If I had a thousand hearts and tongues and a million of years to live, all would be insufficient for paying the mighty debt of praise." He had the great and lasting regret that he could not do more for his Lord. "If it were in my power, I would do a thousand times as much for a gracious and blessed Master."

He preached his first sermon in America on November 13, 1771, his text being "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." It was the message of his forty-three years' ministry and the secret of his passionate love and devotion.

The days of the pioneer called forth men of the rough-rider type, who were of apostolic fervour. One of the noblest of these was Freeborn Garrettson. He ministered with great devotion through the years of the American War, and in those days, when suspicion of disloyalty fell upon Methodists, he endured fierce opposition. He wrote to Wesley: "My lot has mostly been cast in new places to form circuits, which much exposed me to persecution. Once I was imprisoned; twice beaten, left on the highway speechless and senseless (I must have gone into the world of spirits had not God in mercy sent a good Samaritan that bled and took me to a friend's house); once shot at; guns and pistols presented at my breast; once delivered from an armed mob in the dead of night, on the highway, by a flash of lightning; surrounded frequently by mobs; stoned frequently; I have had to escape for my life at dead of night."

When Freeborn Garrettson had been an itinerant some little time his father died, and he inherited his estate, of which a good part was slaves. He accepted this gift without any misgiving, for he had not considered the ethical implications of owning slaves, but soon noticed that his preaching was less powerful. He knew not the reason for this decline in power, but strove to find it out. He called, therefore, all his family together for a season of prayer, and while he was announcing a hymn heard a voice calling: "It is not right to keep your fellow-creatures in bondage; you must let the oppressed go free." At once he told the slaves that they were free, and then tells us: "I was now at liberty to proceed in worship. After singing I kneeled to pray. Had I the tongue of an angel I could not fully describe what I felt; all my dejection and that melancholy gloom that had preyed upon me vanished in a moment, and a divine sweetness ran through my whole frame."

Jesse Lee was another of these preacher-rough-riders. While preaching in North Carolina he was taken as a soldier for the army, but refused, because of his convictions, to fight. He was imprisoned and turned his cell into a preaching-house. When released from the military prison a call clear and imperious came from another general; for when shrinking from the work of the itinerancy and standing amongst a group of preachers Bishop Asbury cried out, "I am going to enlist Brother Lee." Someone said: "What bounty will you give?" Asbury replied: "Grace here, and glory hereafter will be given him if he is faithful." Jesse Lee could not resist this challenge and became a splendidly heroic itinerant preacher. He was a man of ready wit, as we see in the story which tells that, when riding

betwixt two men who were taunting him, one said: "I don't know whether you are the more knave or fool." Lee replied: "Neither. I believe I am just *between* the two." He was a man of devotion and an evangelist of zeal and fire.

Another of the pioneer preachers was Peter Cartwright, the roughest of rough-riders, born for the saddle and the pulpit. In his capacity for enduring the hardships of long rides over rivers, swamps, wide plains, he is like the heroes in Fennimore Cooper's novels. In twenty years he preached eight thousand sermons. We like that story of Peter Cartwright which tells that, having spent two terms in the Illinois Legislature, he was nominated for Congress. Cartwright during his campaign preached, and also spoke at political meetings. At one of his preaching services his political opponent was in the congregation, and Cartwright, getting warmer and warmer in zeal, singled out his opponent and called on him by name and said: "If you are not going to repent and go to Heaven, where are you going?" The tall man, shambling of gait, slowly rose and said: "I am going to Congress, Brother Cartwright," and he did. His name was Abraham Lincoln. Cartwright was one of the great eccentrics—a man of fire and tender love, a great evangelist, and of the real race of pioneers.

We will write of one more of these early founders of the American Methodist Church, William McKendree. He was elected a bishop owing to his great powers of preaching, but soon showed himself an ecclesiastical general with a fine sense of strategy and with great organizing gifts. His work was done at a most crucial time, when American Methodism was passing away

from the benevolent absolutism of Bishop Asbury, and its work had to be based upon a democratic basis. No man since the days of Asbury has more truly left the impress of his personality upon the American Methodist Church than William McKendree. He had that rare combination of gifts: the power both of awakening revival in the hearts of the people, and also of planning and organizing. This is why his work speaks of permanence.

As we look back on the history of the Methodist Church in America we realize that it gained its momentous victory in the early days. Methodism certainly took the tide at the flood. It saw its opportunity and seized it. The preachers followed the new settlers, rode to the farthest outposts, and preached there the love of Jesus. These pioneers determined that Methodism should hold a great and worthy place in American life. The days of these itinerants, with parishes of abnormal extent, were bound to end, but the result of their work still abides. The work of each preacher was soon to become more limited in extent and more intensive. Romance is to be found in this kind of work, but is not so obvious; the work historically is not so picturesque, but it is none the less glorious. America was parcelled out into Societies, circuits, districts, conferences; and delegates were sent from the various conferences to the General Conference. The history of these years shows that a steady progress was made by Methodism in the States.

American Methodism was disturbed by secessions as the community in England was. The first breakaway was made by a preacher called O'Kelley, who thought that the rule of Asbury was despotic. He founded a new Church, called the Republican Methodist Church, but its

history was only a short one. The protests of O'Kelley led American Methodism to introduce slowly more democratic methods into its Church government, but not quickly enough for certain progressive spirits, who desired the admission of laymen into the Annual General Conferences. Owing to their desires not being realized, these reformers formed the Methodist Protestant Church, which exists to this day. The great secession occurred in 1844. It arose upon the question of slavery. Wesley's attitude to slavery was clear, for he called it "the sum of all villainies." Both Coke and Asbury were sworn foes to this traffic. We have already seen how Freeborn Garrettson freed all his slaves. Rules were drawn up in those States where emancipation was possible demanding that members were to free their slaves.

Owing to a mechanical invention of 1793 a new importance came to the cotton trade, and slave labour became of enormous economic value to the South. The South had incomparably more economic interest in slave ownership than the North, and the feeling betwixt North and South on this subject became increasingly strong and was the great storm-centre of politics and religion. The great crisis came in 1844, when Bishop Andrew, having married a second time, became through his wife a legal owner of slaves. Bishop Andrew lived in Georgia, a State which did not allow the freeing of slaves. The fight was fierce, and the Northern delegates pushed through the resolution that Bishop Andrew "should desist from his office so long as this impediment remained." This caused the greatest division in American Methodism—one which was political as well as religious, and which was deepened later by the North and South War. Henceforth the two main divisions of

Methodism in America were the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and God has greatly blessed the work of each Church.

During the Civil War the Methodists of North and South fought against one another. *Sunt lacrymæ rerum!* The Northern Church, sending its message of loyalty to the President, received this famous letter in reply from Abraham Lincoln: "Nobly sustained as the Government has been by all the Churches, I could utter nothing which might in the least appear invidious against any. Yet without this it may fairly be said that the Methodist Episcopal Church, not less devoted than the best, is, by its greater numbers, the most important of all. It is no fault in others that the Methodist Church sends more soldiers to the field, more nurses to the hospitals, and more prayers to Heaven than any. God bless the Methodist Church—bless all the Churches —and blessed be God, who in this our great trial giveth us the Church."

The war ended that slavery which was the original cause of the separation of these two Churches, but further estranged them. The years have, however, sweetened the old and bitter feelings, but still the division remains. Each Church is large, and has so wide a determinate territory that Union does not seem essential; but there is a closer drawing together of these two Churches, and there are movements abroad which reveal that the hopes of Union have not been dismissed. Since this great division of the Churches of the North and South the Negro Methodists have formed themselves into autonomous Churches.

All the Methodist Churches in America have shown an extraordinary keen interest in theological training

and in general education ; they have sent forth their missionaries throughout the world ; they have been in the van of social progress, and to them is due more than to any other Church the conquest of the drinking saloons and the introducing of Prohibition in the States. We believe that American Methodism is, and will be, true to its early traditions, and that its mission is still revealed in the words of Wesley's hymn,

> O let me commend my Saviour to you,
> The publican's Friend and Advocate too.

It is hard to realize that out of Barbara Heck's testimony and Philip Embury's preaching there came forth the Methodist Church of America as we see it to-day. The little one hath become a thousand! Barbara Heck, during the days of war, for loyalist reasons emigrated to Canada and introduced Methodism there. She was, indeed, a mother in Israel, for from her faith and missionary zeal sprang forth the Methodist Churches both of the United States and Canada. Little did Louis XIV realize what great evangelical blessings would come to the New World in the West through the expulsion of the Protestants from the Palatinate.

We consider Wesley's ordination of Whatcoat and Vasey, and his dedication of Coke to create Asbury a Superintendent, in the light of God's blessing, which has so manifestly dwelt upon this work and that of their successors. It is a story of high enterprises, of great pioneers, of intrepid rough-rider preachers, of skilful organizers, and of men of preaching power and devout life. There are to-day in American Methodism forty millions of members and adherents. It is an amazing story, and can have few, if any, parallels in the history

of the Christian Church. Barbara Heck roused Philip Embury to preach in the year 1765. A small Society was commenced, which was the first group of Methodists in America. In 1927 the family has increased to forty millions. What hath God wrought!

Who I ask in amaze,
Hath begotten me these?
And inquire from what quarter they came!
My full heart it replies,
They are born from the skies,
And gives glory to God and the Lamb.

## CHAPTER XI

# THE SEPARATION OF METHODISM FROM THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

IT is possible to prove almost anything from Wesley; he was great enough to hold together in a consistency of life seemingly contradictory ideas. He was Conservative and Radical; Mystic and hater of Mysticism; Traditionalist and Reformer; Organizer and Visionary; loyal son of the Church of England and the Iconoclast who ordained men to administer the rites of the Church; Idealist and Realist; a man of one book and of many books; one who placed at one moment the whole stress on Faith and the next urged the enormous importance of Works; superstitious and rationalistic; credulous and incredulous; trenchant in criticism and amazingly tender; complex in character and yet utterly single-minded. He rightly said of himself: "I have no secrets." Everything in his life was open to the full light of day. In nothing was he more paradoxical than in his relations to the Church of England. He preached his first sermon at South Leigh, and in the pulpit in that church these words are inscribed on a brass tablet:

> In this pulpit the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, preached his first sermon A.D. 1725.

. . . . .

> I declare once more that I live and die a member of the Church of England, and that none who regard my judgement or advice will ever separate from it.
>
> December 11, 1789.

The quotation is accurate, but it omits all reference to Wesley's action. There can be no doubt that Wesley loved with a tender love the Church of England. He often alludes to it—and the references to his devotion are many and are scattered over all his life. Sometimes his protestations seem too vocal, and we say, " Methinks that Wesley doth protest too much ", and know that there is some reason for his constant protestations other than his sincere love of the Church. He is often striving to declaim himself into loyalty—an impossible thing to do. We have no doubt that he loved the Church of England—but that he was always loyal to it we cannot believe. His public teaching was in harmony with its articles and homilies; but those who claim him as a loyal Anglican forget the other John Wesley, who by candle-light at 4 a.m. ordained in Bristol Whatcoat and Vasey, the Rev. James Creighton assisting. He dedicated Dr. Coke as Superintendent, knowing that it was his task to ordain Francis Asbury a presbyter, and then to dedicate him to the work of a Superintendent, and that by Asbury and Dr. Coke the first group of Methodist preachers of America would be ordained. He did this without apology and without regret; yea, he rejoiced in the great success which came through the labours of these ministers. He says of his ordination of Whatcoat and Vasey: " Being now clear in my own mind, I took a step which I had long weighed in my mind." He not only ordained men for work in America on

September 1, 1784, but the next day writes: "I added three more, which I verily believe will be much to the glory of God."

The list of the other ordinations by Wesley includes three for Scotland (in 1785); two for Scotland, one for Antigua, one for Newfoundland (in 1786); three for West Indies, one for Nova Scotia (in 1787); two for Scotland and six without any territorial restriction (in 1788); and three also without limitation in 1789. Being convinced that there were only two orders in the primitive Church, and that the office of presbyter and episcopos were virtually the same, he ordained men; and thus in action showed that he was by no means an orthodox clergyman of the Church of England. We think that Wesley, in trying to keep the Methodists loyal to the Church of England, attempted an impossible task, and that he realized it before the end of his life. He knew well the difficulties under which many of his beloved Methodists lived—for they were often refused Communion in the parish church. John and Charles Wesley had both been repelled from the Communion; and Mrs. Fletcher, one of the most holy of women, was refused Communion in the church where her saintly husband had laboured for so many years. Canon Overton rightly says: "Next to Susannah Wesley herself Mrs. Fletcher stands pre-eminent among the heroines of Methodism." We cannot wonder that such actions drove the Methodists into a certain hostility to the Church of England. Wesley was aware that in some places where there were Methodist Societies the vicar was a man of irregular life, and that in many of the Churches the Communion was rarely administered. He knew that some of the Methodist preachers had ventured

to give Communion in the Societies ; and although he had strongly insisted upon them doing it no longer, he could not allay the restlessness which was abroad amongst his people. He was aware of the difficulty of the Methodists remaining loyal to the Church of England, and of the illogicality of his position. He ordained men who were permitted to administer the Sacraments in Scotland, but who on crossing the border were " unpriested " by him. He defended his action in exercising the right of Ordination against the strictness of his brother Charles, and knew full well his loyal disloyalty.

It was for Wesley a problem of two loyalties. He cherished a loyalty to the Church of England, and was also ever loyal in ministering to the immediate claims of the Kingdom of God. But his dominant loyalty was created by the crying needs of his age. He saw which way Methodism was moving ; and although he had done things to hasten the severance, fought with a rare tenacity to restrain his people from leaving the Church of England. He lived and died a member of the Church of England, but such another member she has never possessed—an ordainer of others, with the world for his parish. He denied the parochial limitations of the Church of England and its episcopal claims. The Bishop of London (Dr. Gibson) was right when he said to John and Charles Wesley : " Don't you know that no man can exercise parochial duty in London without my leave ? " But the Wesleys obeyed a more imperious call. John Wesley's letters from 1784 onwards tell that he foresaw the possibility of separation, although he strove to do all in his power to prevent it. He realized that his actions might lead to the separation, and yet would not refrain from them because of any fear of what

might happen after his death. The difficulty was all the greater because Wesley had deepened the loyalty of his people to Holy Communion, as every reader of the *Journal* knows. The new spiritual experience which came to so many thousands of people had placed at the centre of their worship the partaking of the bread and the wine. His people had been nourished by the sacramental hymns of Charles Wesley, which, although never sacramentarian, sing of a real Presence and of a holy trysting-place. This made the problem all the more difficult, and we believe that, although Wesley delayed the breaking away of the Methodists from the Church of England, he was responsible for it.

He had always held lightly the parochial system of the Church of England, and felt he had the right to enter into any parish if he so desired. He had administered, as also had Charles Wesley, in the Methodist chapels the Communion—these chapels being " unconsecrated " buildings. He had at first reluctantly favoured lay preachers, but soon saw in their ministry, which was entirely free from episcopal sanction, a wonderful means of furthering the Kingdom of God. He gathered together a band of awakened people, shepherded them into Societies, gave to them officers, and created a compact organization, unrelated to the government of the Church of England. Surely he must have seen whither this would lead.

He was a truly Catholic soul with a love for primitive institutions, and was always delighted that he could compare such services as his " Society Classes " with the primitive catechumen classes, his watch-night services and love feasts with the Early Church agape and " vigils ", the men and women worshipping separated

from one another in his services with the customs of the Early Church; the class-tickets which he gave to the members he delighted to liken to the *tesseræ*, and to the *commendatitia*, or commendatory letters given to members of the Early Church. When he first appointed district visitors he saw with delight their relation to the primitive deacons and deaconesses. All Saints' Day was his favourite festival, and his references to it are many and tender. It was his habit on these days to preach on the "Communion of Saints". He realized with delight that the Early Church had room for the ministry of lay preachers. We see his love of ancient practices in the following two extracts from late dates in the *Journal*: Sunday, December 25, 1774, Christmas—"During the twelve festival days we had the Lord's Supper daily; a little emblem of the Primitive Church." Sunday, March 30, 1777—"Easter Day, a solemn and comfortable day. During the Octave I administered the Lord's Supper every morning, after the example of the Primitive Church." Although his heart was strangely warmed while one was reading Luther's *Preface to the Epistle to the Romans*, he turned more often to the ante-Nicene Church than to the Reformation. All the distinctive services of the Methodist Societies have a kinship to those of the Primitive Church, except the Covenant Service, which Wesley introduced in August 1755, when he explained the nature of the Covenant "after the tenor of the Covenant proposed, in the words of that blessed man Richard Alleine" (one of the clergymen ejected in 1662).

Wesley was no innovator; but he was an eclectic. His choice was determined by the master passion of his life—the raising up of a people who would manifest in

their lives the beauty of holiness. His supreme desire was for ethical order in individual lives rather than for ecclesiastical consistency. Every service and every act of his life was bent to this one end. He was a primitive guided by the Holy Spirit, Who enlightened for him the Scriptures and guided him step by step. We believe that in the noblest sense of the word he was Catholic.

But he was a paradoxical Catholic, for Catholic rites appealed to him, but not the Catholic claim of authority. Wesley was *au fond* an individualist. His grandfathers —Dr. Annesley and John Wesley—came to life again in him.

In 1761 he wrote: "If there be a law that a minister of Christ who is not suffered to preach the Gospel in church should not preach it elsewhere, or a law that forbids Christian people to hear the Gospel of Christ out of their parish church when they cannot hear it therein, I judge that law to be absolutely sinful, and that it is sinful to obey it." For Wesley the "Canon law" was not the final court of appeal. The court to which he appealed was internal, for it was the conscience illumined by the Spirit and enlightened by the Reason and Scripture. It is true that again and again he writes beseeching his followers to remain in the Church of England. But Charles Wesley saw the results of John Wesley's actions more clearly than his brother. He realized the truth of the words of Lord Mansfield: "Ordination is separation." In 1779 Charles wrote to his brother: "The preachers do not love the Church of England; when we are gone a separation is inevitable." Charles Wesley was the more intelligent prophet.

Looking back we can see that the institution of the

Conference was a step towards separation. It first met in 1744, and has met every year since. It was in Wesley's lifetime always presided over by him, and decided the affairs of the Methodist Societies, spending much of its time in conversing on great theological themes. When it first met it was small, and seemingly of little importance, but it soon became potent and central in Methodism. The Conference gave to Methodism a coherence, a real compactness, and a sense of unity and individuality. Besides these many happenings which pointed towards separation, there were three acts which showed that the unmistakable trend of Methodism was in that direction. In 1763 Wesley drew up the Model Deed. This provided that the trustees of each chapel should permit to preach only those who were appointed by the Conference, provided that they preached no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament* and his first four volumes of sermons. This linked all the chapels to the Conference, and made for a further compactness in organization. In 1784 the second act took place which quickened the pace towards separation. Wesley drew up the Deed of Declaration declaring what the Conference was, and giving to it a clearly defined organization and a continuity after his death.

The Conference was to consist of one hundred preachers. They were to meet once a year, to fill up the vacancies in their number, appoint a president and secretary, station the preachers in their various circuits, admit proper persons into the Ministry, and to have the general control of the Methodist Societies. In this Deed the powers of the Conference were clearly defined, and arrangements were made for the continuance, after Wesley's

death, of the Methodist Societies. The third and most important event was the ordinations by Wesley of men to work in America, Scotland, and also of some for work in unlimited fields. This meant, as Charles Wesley said, that Methodism had "crossed the Rubicon". During Wesley's day many of the Societies met during the hours when the services were being held in the Church of England. Wesley fought against this for a time—but compromised by allowing them to meet when they chose, except when the monthly communion was being held in the Church. He was the most sincere and single-hearted of men, but on the question of the relation of Methodism to the Church of England he looked one way and rowed another.

We see in the following quotation that Wesley looked to the Church of England and yet moved from it (1787, November 3rd): "I had a long conversation with Mr. Clulow [his legal advisor] on that execrable Act called the Conventicle Act. After consulting the 'Act of Toleration', we were both clearly convinced that it was the safest way to license *all* our chapels and *all* our travelling preachers, not as Dissenters, but simply as 'preachers of the Gospel'." This is a distinction without a difference—what counts is that he licensed them. As Tyreman says: "'The Execrable Conventicle Act' was levelled against Dissenters from the Church of England; the Act of Toleration was passed for the relief of such Dissenters; and Wesley, by availing himself of the provisions of that Act, *ipso facto* conceded the fact that the Methodists were Dissenters." The marvel is that the breaking away of the Methodist Societies from the Church of England was delayed so long. Many years before Methodists ceased to say we are loyal to the

Church of England, the members of the Church of England had looked upon the Methodists as disloyal sons of the Church. That the break did not come earlier than it did is an illustration of the amazing power that Wesley had upon his people.

The tributary streams flowed into one river which swept the Methodists away from the Church of England. Besides the loyal Churchmen in the Societies, there were many utterly ignorant of the ways and usages of the Church of England who had been won to the service of God by the Methodist preachers. They were held together in a Society which had not formally broken away from the Church of England, but showed a diminution of loyalty to it. But when Wesley died the change came. It came gradually, but to our mind the separation was inevitable. It is impossible to create a large, autonomous, living, and adventurous Society within another Church, and without any control by that Church, and to continue thus for ever. After Wesley's death the Conference, as defined by the Deed of Declaration, carried on the work of Methodism, and for a short time refused to break away from the Church. There were three parties amongst the Methodists: those whose loyalty was towards the Anglican Church; those who had been gathered out of the world by the preaching of Wesley and his helpers, and desired to live within the Methodist Societies, and therein to observe the Sacraments; and there were a small number who leaned towards Dissent. The Conference, after Wesley's death, resolved: "We engage to follow strictly the plan which Mr. Wesley left us." But this resolve pacified no one, for it could be so variously interpreted. In 1792 the Conference confirmed its legislation of the previous year,

but in 1793 it was resolved by a very large majority that "The Societies should have the privilege of the Lord's Supper where they unanimously desired it." Some Societies decided for administration and others against. In 1795 the Plan of Pacification decreed that the Lord's Supper, Baptism, Burial of the Dead, and Services in Church hours must not be permitted unless the majority of trustees, stewards, and leaders of a Church approved of such a step, and could assure the Conference in writing that no separation was likely to ensue. The consent of the Conference had to be gained before any change was made. Where the Lord's Supper had already been peaceably ministered there was to be no interference. These were difficult days—but we believe that the Methodists were wondrously guided. They took the only way that was possible for men who thought more of the work than of the particular type of organization. If the bishops of the Anglican Church had, at the death of Wesley, grasped the strategic opportunity and used it with wisdom, English Methodism might have become a society within the Church; but not a hand was lifted, not a gesture was made. The difficulties would, however, have been gigantic; for already American Methodism had broken off all connexion with the Church of England, and was moving forward with magnificent courage and triumphant success in its apostolic campaign; and many Methodists had memories which did not tend to lead their thoughts to absorption in a Church which in so many ways had persecuted them with so fierce a hatred, and which had so often offered them stones instead of bread.

Wesley had organized better than he knew. He had seen clearly the needs of his age, and with magnifi-

cent strategy and generalship had organized the prosecution of the great war. The work and the organization had grown together. Wesley's method was first life and then organization. The people were gathered into Societies—the Societies were divided into classes; classes were shepherded by leaders; the financial work of the Societies was in the hands of stewards who also ministered to the needs of the poor; the Societies were grouped together into circuits under the pastoral charge of a preacher. Conference gave centrality to Methodism and a sense of unity. Wesley himself, however, was the great unifying force in early Methodism. His tours were never haphazard, but were always very carefully planned. Never was a man more truly a bishop of the Church of God, and no bishop of the eighteenth century was so full of episcopal labours; none had such a wide diocese (that of three kingdoms); none loved God more devotedly nor served Him more fully. He passed from Society to Society, encouraging the faithful, comforting the saints, rebuking the backsliders, watching both the large and small events in the lives of his people. Wesley, by the force of his personality, by his unwearying labours, and by his swiftness to grasp an idea and to adapt it to the work, gave to Methodism a durability and strength which enabled it to weather the storm, even when he, the ship's pilot, had passed away.

We realize how full of vision for the future Wesley was in his organizing, when we remember that the main lines of Methodist government to-day are the same as those laid down by Wesley. The Conference is still the central authority—the classes, the circuits, and the itinerancy still remain. In the Methodism of to-day there are still far more local preachers than ordained

ministers. There have been certain adaptations and changes, but essentially the organization is the same. It was not until 1836 that the Conference decreed that every minister, after a probationary period, should be ordained by the imposition of the hands of the President assisted by some senior ministers.

In 1791, in order to continue the supervision of the Societies, the circuits were grouped into districts containing not less than eight circuits. England had eighteen districts, Ireland six, Scotland two, Wales one. The Chairman of each District was responsible to the Conference for the carrying out of Conference legislation in his district. Thus we have the scheme of Methodism—Member, Class, Society, Circuit, District, Conference. It is true that Wesley loomed high above all his workers, and above all other figures in his century. But he had given such devotion to his task, organized with such care, and inspired men and women so truly with the love of God and love to men, that when he passed from them, in a very true sense he returned to them, and they were guided by the same spirit by which he was governed. It was a time of great and critical difficulty for the Methodists of 1791; but they were men of prayer, they waited upon God, and sought His guidance, which was not denied to them. They went forward with a sure sense of guidance and of victory. They knew the truth of Charles Wesley's hymn:

> By Thy unerring Spirit led,
> We shall not in the desert stray;
> We shall not full direction need,
> Nor miss our providential way;
> As far as from danger as from fear,
> While love, Almighty Love, is near.

In 1891 the Conference declared that "the People called Methodists has a true and proper position as a Church, with all the authorities, privileges, and responsibilities belonging to the New Testament Church ; and in this view of our principles, and of the facts of the case, the Conference, so far from discouraging, distinctly approves of the general and popular use of the term, the Wesleyan Methodist Church."

The advance during the first twenty-four years after Wesley's passing was extraordinary. If we remember what Wesley had been to his people, and how astonishing had been his labours and his influence upon the Societies, we realize how triumphantly his followers laboured after his passing when we consider the following figures :

| | Great Britain. | Missions. | United States. |
|---|---|---|---|
| | MEMBERS. | | |
| 1790 .. .. | 71,668 | 5,300 | 43,265 |
| 1815 .. .. | 211,063 | 19,885 | 211,129 |
| Increase .. | 139,395 | 14,585 | 167,864 |
| | MINISTERS. | | |
| 1790 .. .. | 294 | 19 | 198 |
| 1815 .. .. | 868 | 74 | 687 |
| Increase .. | 574 | 55 | 489 |

The Methodists of 1815 having passed triumphantly through years of great naval and land battles, through times of revolution, might well have said, as they realized the tale of their progress, "What hath God wrought ?" ; "The best of all is God is with us".

## CHAPTER XII

## METHODIST SECESSIONS

METHODISM after the death of Wesley was troubled by great internal differences. It is true that this was no new thing for the Societies. In the days of Wesley they had great problems, and strange disorders had from time to time appeared. As we read the story of the *Journal* we often think of St. Paul's letters to the Corinthians, and realize that the difficulties that came to him were shared by Wesley also. But the problems had been largely those of belief and of conduct, and not of organization. Wesley's rule was rarely called in question. He gathered his preachers together for consultation, but the final decision was with him and not with them. He was a benevolent autocrat, and used his power extremely well. Henry Venn pointed out that Wesley was dogmatic and that too much power was centred in him, and Wesley replied: "My dogmaticalness is neither more nor less than a custom of coming to the point at once, and telling my mind flat and plain without any preface or ceremony. The power I have I never sought. It was the undesired, unexpected result of the work God was pleased to work by me. I have a thousand times sought to devolve it on others, but as yet I cannot. I therefore suffer it until I can find any to ease me of my burden." He certainly carried this

load bravely, and did not lay it down until death released him from it.

The death of Wesley changed the whole situation, for there was no one who could take his place. The voices of many parties were heard, and questions could no longer be settled by the aged "Father in God".

The years from 1791 to 1849 speak of difficult times for Methodism, and the details of the story are not interesting to those who are unfamiliar with the names of the leaders of this period. When Wesley died he took away with him much of the romance of Methodism, for he was a "hero" figure, the crusader, the pioneer, the Roland of the fight, and the Bayard. He created a compact organization, but with little machinery. The campaign was for him ever the central thing, and the organization was mobile, flexible, and capable of swift adaptation to need. We hear the clashing of swords, and not the noise of the cog-wheels of some gigantic and permanent machinery. But the organization days were bound to come. The work could not continue unless new arrangements were made. John Wesley was great enough to be outrageously inconsistent. He was devoted to the Church of England, and also broke some of her most honoured and sacred rules. But the Methodists could not imitate him. Wesley had created many problems, and his successors were compelled to deal with them. Questions arose demanding answers, and the chief one was, "What is the relation of Methodists to the Church of England?" Another was, "Where shall we receive Communion?"

Alexander Kilham (1762–98), who by a strange coincidence was born, as Wesley was, in Epworth,

desired that all connexion with the Church of England should come to an end. He was a man of great devotion, and one to whom the Gospel had brought a great awakening and a marvellous light. He tells us that when God spoke to his soul, "I found a great love for everyone around me; my heart was filled with unspeakable joy." He had been one of Wesley's travelling preachers, and a year after Wesley's death was ordained by two ministers, Joseph Cownley and Thomas Atmore, who signed the ordination certificate and wrote: "Having been ordained ourselves Elders of the Church of God by the late John Wesley and other ordained ministers." He became convinced that the Methodists should claim their "Gospel" privileges, separate entirely from the Church of England, and that radical changes should be introduced into the government of the Methodist Society.

Alexander Kilham had ministered in Scotland, and his proposals show signs of the influence of Presbyterianism upon him. He desired not only the ordination of Methodist ministers, but also that greater power should be given to the lay officers, and that in the Conference there should be laymen. All that he fought for became reality in the later government of Methodist Churches, but his advocacy and pamphleteering were not favoured by the majority of the early Methodists. He was regarded as a disturber of the peace, and shared the fate of so many eager reformers—for in 1796 he was expelled from the Methodist Society. All were agreed as to the sincerity and apostolic fervour of Alexander Kilham, but the Conference, regarding his advocacy as hurtful to Methodism, removed his name from its list of ministers. The struggle was entirely related to polity and had no reference to doctrine.

This first secession from the Mother Society, like all that succeeded it, except one almost too small to consider, was caused solely by divergent theories of organization.

Under the leadership of Kilham and his sympathizers the Methodist New Connexion was founded in 1797. It is, indeed, impossible to study this controversy without realizing the great difficulties which were encountered at this time by the Conference, and also the shining piety and reforming energy of Alexander Kilham. He was in fervour and fidelity a true son of Wesley. He treated his body with relentless severity—four or five hours being his usual nightly share of sleep. He preached seven or eight times a week, and his life, short though it was, reveals to us a man of fiery and apostolic zeal. He saw more clearly than most Methodists of his time, and spoke more fearlessly. His notoriety in Methodism came through his agitation, but we would rather think of his greatness as a preacher, who in season and out of season called men to God. He was first and foremost an evangelist, and became a reformer because he thought that changes in the organization would help forward the great work of evangelizing England. We catch the fire of his devotion and love in the message he gave when dying: "Tell all the world that Jesus is precious."

The secession of those who formed the Methodist New Connexion did not take many members from the Mother Society. The few seceders started a small community, and through their tireless labours spread the work of the movement by claiming new converts, entering new regions, and building new chapels.

It is a strange irony that Methodism, which had been considered by the Church of England as an army of irregulars, should have failed to deal successfully with

the irregulars who arose within its own community. The new movement grew slowly but steadily, and its work became a great blessing to many.

In 1814 the Methodist New Connexion contained 8,292 members, 207 churches, with 44 ministers, 229 local preachers, and 101 chapels.

The rise of the Primitive Methodist Church is not in any wise similar to that of the Methodist New Connexion, for it did not centre around the problem of lay representation, or that of the relationship of Methodism to the Church of England. It sprang out of the question of the claims of Evangelism, and the centre of the struggle was upon Mow Cop—that lonely, gaunt hill of Staffordshire. It was a struggle betwixt the fiery evangelist, who had a certain contempt for the recognized methods of Methodism and those who were appointed by the Conference to further the work of the Societies. The relation of the fervid evangelist to the Methodist Societies seems to us singularly like that of Wesley, in the early days of his preaching, to the Church of England. The strictures which were passed upon him were showered upon them. It must be remembered that in all these controversies of early Methodism the disturbances were not through decay of life, but rather through an excess of it. In the story of Mow Cop we see men of great spiritual power and of a passionate experience of Divine Love breaking bounds, and in their desire to expedite the work adopting unusual methods. The story centres around a few personalities as rugged and as strong as Mow Cop itself. The most conspicuous of these was Hugh Bourne. He lived in days of a revival, nominally a Methodist one, but which soon became too great and wide for supervision by the Methodist authori-

ties. Classes had been formed, and a chapel had been built in the Burslem area without official recognition.

In those days of heightened experience William Clowes was converted, and with Hugh Bourne became the fashioner of Primitive Methodism. The excitement became all the greater through the arrival from America of an eccentric evangelist, called Lorenzo Dow. He had itinerated in Canada, the United States, and Ireland, and had taken part in camp meetings, which were first held in America in 1799. Dow came to Burslem, and in April 1807 the first English camp meeting was held. Open-air services were familiar to the people through the preaching of the Methodists, but this was a new and curious happening. The first camp meeting was held on Mow Cop, and so great was the crowd that, before the day was over, four preaching-stands had to be erected, and the services were marked by unrestrained excitement, and lasted with scarcely any intermission from dawn until eve. The first camp meeting had been allowed on the understanding that it would be the last, but when this was followed by another the authorities were alarmed.

There was of necessity a great deal of disturbance at these meetings; they had the appearance of a fair day, and thousands came out of mere curiosity; and yet many who came to scoff remained to pray.

The Liverpool Methodist Conference considered the question of camp meetings; and realizing that the work done was unattached to the work of the circuits round about Mow Cop, and seeing the signs of irregularity and fanaticism in these meetings, gave its judgement against them.

A short time after the meeting of that Conference

another large camp meeting was held at Norton-on-the-Moors on August 23, 1807. In this camp meeting the Primitive Methodist Church was born. Some months later Hugh Bourne was expelled by his circuit quarterly meeting (June 1808), the reason given being that he had not attended his class. The indictment was true. His defence was that during that time he had been engaged in evangelizing and in holding camp meetings.

It is easy to judge, but we refrain from that, for there were difficulties on each side. His superintendent minister said of Hugh Bourne: "He had a tendency to set up other than the ordinary worship." That charge is one that was constantly levelled at Wesley when he gathered his people into Societies, and preached at market crosses and on village greens. But no expulsion could reduce Hugh Bourne to inaction. The work grew and other leaders were given to the movement; amongst the chief of them was William Clowes. For some short time the people who were won by the sacrificial labours of Bourne and his followers were gathered into the Methodist Societies, but this did not last long. In March 1810 the Camp Meeting Methodists became a distinct community. In June 1810 William Clowes was deprived of his position as a local preacher in the Methodist Society, and in September was expelled from membership because, contrary to the Methodist discipline, he had attended camp meetings.

The work of the new community grew slowly and was confined to the Midlands. But it tells of high heroism and of evangelical fervour. It started in the expulsion of a few members, but its adherents were those who had been won by its fiery preachers from the world and not from the Methodist Societies.

There is no need to enter into details of the development of this community, which came to be called the Primitive Methodist Church. It sought for more democratic government than was found in the Methodist Societies. It encouraged the service of women, and counted women amongst its itinerants.

Bourne drew up rules for the government of the new movement. One of them was the message of Wesley: "It is certain that opinion is not religion, not even right opinions." There is a Catholic note in the following rule: "Therefore walk in wisdom to them that are without, and honour all men, highly esteeming pious people of all denominations, and endeavour to make this Society a blessing to all people."

The early work of this new Society was carried on in the days when the Luddites were breaking up machinery and the Levellers were contemplating a general rising. The work of Bourne, Clowes, and their helpers was done amongst men of wild anarchic temper, and the preaching of these Camp Meeting Methodists did much to restrain the lawless spirits and to bring them to a better mind. It deepened their sense of social injustice, but led them to seek for reforms without methods of violence. The influence of these preachers upon social righteousness in our nation is greater than the historian has realized.

It is impossible to read the story of these early leaders in this movement without realizing their kinship in spirit and in courage to the preachers who toiled in Wesley's day. They encountered the mob with the same fine abandon, invaded new territory with eager enthusiasm; prayed and loved men into the kingdom.

The church bells and brass bands were used as instruments to drown the voices of these preachers. These

men were pulled down from market crosses and clapped into jail. A Mr. Lockwood was played upon by the fire engine at Newark until half-drowned, but, unconquerable, he gurgled forth these words: "You can't quench the fire within." Cottages were burned down that housed this new kind of Methodists, but still the work grew! It grew through the intrepid devotion of its members, their inventive courage, the fire and glow of their message, their organizing powers, and the skilful generalship of its leaders. It did other work than the older Methodist Society, for it sought new fields for its activities. We believe that its holy labours gave to all the Methodist Societies new fire and glow, and looking back upon those days of more than a hundred years ago we see God's hand guiding the Methodists of all communities to spread Scriptural holiness throughout the land. The Primitive Methodist Church, which was formed by the Evangelistic fervour of these ardent souls, is a glorious memorial of their toil and devotions.

It would, indeed, be a sign of blindness if one only saw the missionary labours of these men, and failed to see that the older Society had also within it men of equal devotion who worked with as noble a courage as those leaders who were cast out of it.

But other "irregulars" were to arise, and Wesleyan Methodism was not able to harness the energy of these fiery souls.

The County of Devon had been only slightly influenced by the Methodist Revival. Wesley spent little time in ministering there. In the year 1812 there were only thirty-two chapels in Devon, and at the same date a hundred and twenty-two in Cornwall. In 1778 William O'Bryan was born in Luxulyan, Cornwall. John

Wesley, when O'Bryan was a boy, laid his hands upon his head and said: "May he be a blessing to hundreds of thousands." This prayer was, indeed, answered. O'Bryan became an itinerant evangelist, and after labouring in Cornwall migrated to Devon; and finding twenty parishes in North Devon where Methodism was unknown, devoted himself to the task of evangelizing them. He seems to have been handled clumsily by the Methodist minister of his area, and his name was removed from the Society Class Book, because he had absented himself from class for three weeks. But no disciplinary action could subdue this Gospel preacher, and he gathered together in North Devon small groups of his converts, and was aided in his work by like-minded helpers; and thus the communion calling itself the Bible Christians came into being, its first separate Society being formed in 1815. Its headquarters were at Shebbear. Although in later years its work spread to many other quarters of England, its main base of operation has always been in the West Counties. It is well to remember that few members of this new Society were seceders from the Old Methodism, but were largely new converts who had been won by the earnest missionary zeal of a small group of men.

The story of the formation of the Methodist New Connexion, the Primitive Methodist Church, and the Bible Christians tells of new movements which found their leaders in the Methodist Church, but gathered their members largely from outside its borders. It remains, however, for us to speak of a secession from the parent body of a large number of its members. This break-away came in 1849, and led to the formation of the Methodist Free Church. It must be remembered that the agitation

for political reform had been waged with great fervour for many years, and a certain measure of success had come to the reformers. Reform was in the air, and Methodism which had been recruited from the people had felt the shock of its impact.

There were some who thought that the power of the Conference had become too great, and that the clerical domination was too powerful. They sought for lay representation in the Conference, and for more power for the laity in the circuits. The agitation was led by three men —Everett, Dunn, and Griffith—who by pamphlets and by debate sought to bring a greater lay administration into Methodism. They waged the fight with a certain fierceness, and their attack centred upon Jabez Bunting, who became to them the very symbol of autocratic rule. He had done immense service in Methodism, and was a man of real moral stature to whom much power had come because of his great gifts.

Owing to the attacks made upon the Constitution and the somewhat reckless accusations made upon Dr. Bunting, the Conference asked the ministers to declare whether or not they were responsible for the issue of some pamphlets called *Fly-sheets*. Everett, Dunn, and Griffith, refusing to sign this disavowal, were expelled by the Conference. Scenes of great commotion ensued all over Methodism, and a large number of Methodists seceded and founded the United Methodist Free Churches. Some of the property of Methodism was seized by the new community, and in many towns to-day we see a witness to the fierceness of the fight in the fact that near to a Wesleyan Church there is a Methodist Free Church erected in 1849 or thereabouts. It is estimated that 100,000 members seceded.

This new Society first received the name of the Wesleyan Reformers, and later was known as the United Methodist Free Churches.

We have traced the rise of the new communities of Methodists which arose after Wesley's death. Each manifested its right to exist by the good work it was able to do. There are some marked divergences in the government of the various Methodist Churches, but each has shown a true devotion and loyalty to Evangelical doctrine. Each has been inspired by the teaching and labours of Wesley and his helpers, and each has a great and common inheritance—the doctrines and the hymn-book of the Wesleys. They have revealed a oneness even amidst their diversity of operations, for they have all lived and worked in the same warm climate of devotion and song. In the year 1907 the Bible Christians, the Methodist New Connexion, and the United Methodist Churches united together and became the United Methodist Church, thus making the first contribution towards the healing of old disputes and ushering in the dawn of that day which will witness the Union of all the Methodist Churches.

## CHAPTER XIII

## THE GOVERNMENT AND UNION OF METHODISM

WHEN Wesley died there were 71,688 members in Great Britain, 5,300 in Foreign Missions, and 43,265 in the United States. To-day there are 519,510 in Great Britain and 10,270,352 in the United States, the total number in world-wide Methodism being 11,591,087. If we allow three adherents for every member, the Methodist family throughout the world numbers over 46 millions. At the death of Wesley the total number of members in all the Societies of Methodism in Great Britain, the United States, and in Mission Stations was 120,253; to-day—137 years after Wesley's passing—it is over eleven and a half millions. It is a remarkable advance, and cannot be accounted for merely by the theory of a series of happy accidents. The work of Methodism has stood the test of the years, and has revealed a remarkable adaptability to changing times and circumstances. It has shown that it can be transplanted to any new country and retain its virility there. It is to-day found in every part of the world.

Methodism was happy in its birth, for God gave to it a Catholic-minded founder who was far ahead of his century. We can only find him to-day by looking forward. If he were to come back again he would

chide us for seeking to discover our solution of our difficulties by gazing backwards, and would bid us turn our eyes forwards and upwards. He gave to Methodism its great characteristic, for he made it a Missionary Church. Early Methodism was missionary and mobile; it did not wait for buildings, or for invitations to towns and villages, but went without invitation and preached in the open air. Methodism was an army of missionaries. If a Methodist went to a village or town where Methodism was unknown he created it by his testimony. It was always possible to form a Society; it only needed two or three seeking souls and Jesus in the midst. Every Methodist was a centre of influence, and thus the work grew with amazing rapidity. In derision its foes said that people became *infected* by it. John Furz, one of Wesley's preachers, in telling the story of his life, mentions that the vicar of his parish—Wilton, near Salisbury—in preaching against Methodism, said: "For there is sprung up amongst us a new religion called Methodism; it is like the plague. They that have it infect whole families." It certainly was contagious and infectious, and its message worked in the minds of its hearers and brought to life unsuspected capabilities. Cardinal Manning said that only the Catholic Church and the Methodists could produce saints. The remark is too limited; but it testifies to the fact of Catholic and Methodist saints. Bishop Lavington, in *Methodists and Papists Considered*, poured his fierce scorn upon Wesley because he was like Francis of Assisi. The indictment is true, not only of Wesley, but also of some of his lowly and unknown followers; for Methodism has, indeed, its hierarchy of saints. Methodism laid stress upon a change of nature and insisted on the need

of witnessing. The early Methodists sang with passion and verve

> We for Christ, our Master, stand,
> Lights in a benighted land;
> We our dying Lord confess,
> We are Jesu's witnesses.

We believe that this was the central fact of Methodism. It witnessed to something which men could accept—the love of Jesus; it relied not upon organization, but upon the living word empowered by the Spirit. George Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley, Berridge, Grimshaw, John Nelson, and a host of unknown men saw the Gospel bringing new experiences of life and victory to thousands. The Gospel was to them something which was unfailing in its working when men received it. The almost incredible thing was that men should not respond to the call of God's Love.

> O God, of good the unfathomed sea!
> Who would not give his heart to Thee?
> Who would not love Thee with his might?

Methodism has placed its great emphasis upon the Evangelical message, and we believe that in essence it is still true to the Gospel as preached by the Wesleys. It preaches the blessings of conversion, the assurance of sins forgiven, the witness of the Spirit; and calls men to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Methodism gives, as it ever has done, a large trust to its laity. Its leaders, its stewards, its trustees, its Sunday-school workers, and its local preachers testify to this fact. It has been computed that out of every seven services held on Sundays in Wesleyan churches five are conducted by local preachers. The proportion in the

other Methodist churches in Great Britain of services taken by local preachers will probably be larger. Biblical criticism has never frightened the true Methodist; for his appeal is to something which cannot be shaken—to the experience of Christ's love and presence. Evolutionary theories of Truth bring no terrors to Methodists, for they have clearly seen that it is the fact which is central and not the process. The Methodists freely admit the truth of the Puritan Robinson: "God has still fresh light to break forth from His Word." We believe that Methodism amidst all the theological changes has remained fundamentally true to its standards. It is decreed in the Model Deed of 1832 that "No minister shall maintain, promulgate or teach any Doctrine or Practice contrary to what is contained in certain *Notes on the New Testament*, commonly reputed to be the notes of the said John Wesley, or in the First Four Volumes of Sermons commonly reputed to be written and published by him." We agree with Dr. H. Maldwyn Hughes when, in writing on "Wesley's Standards in the Light of To-day", he says: "The fact that the Standards of Wesleyan Methodism are not articles of Religion but expositions of the Scriptures would seem to indicate that the *Primary* Standards are the Scriptures, and that there is a sense in which the *Notes* and *Sermons* are but *Secondary* Standards." Wesley desired his preachers to preach the fundamentals of Evangelical truth, and certainly had no desire to impose upon them any dogmatic system of theology. The Conference of 1919 passed with very few dissentients the following resolution: "The Notes and Forty-four Sermons were not intended to impose a system of formal or speculative theology on our preachers, but to set up

standards of preaching and belief which should secure loyalty to the fundamental truths of the Gospel of Redemption and ensure the Church's continued witness to the realities of the Christian experience of salvation." The Conference also affirmed "that, inasmuch as it is in harmony with our traditional practice, and is essential to spiritual freedom that the living Church shall interpret its own Standards, the Conference itself is the final judge of the harmony or otherwise of the doctrinal teaching of its preachers with the system of truth contained in the Standards." The Standards are the same as in Wesley's day, for then as now they were based on the *Notes* and *Sermons*, and the Conference was in practice the final arbiter as to their teaching.

The organization of Methodism still shows the same fundamental system as in the days of Wesley. It is marked by great simplicity, and yet reveals a system of organization which leaves little room for inefficiency. The members of a Church are banded together in classes; the oversight of the members is in the watchful care of leaders; the Spiritual Court of the Society is the Leaders' Meeting; the Societies in a certain area comprise a Circuit, the chief Court of which is the Circuit Quarterly Meeting; the Circuits are banded together into Districts presided over by the Chairmen of Districts, and representatives meet twice a year in Synods. Representatives are sent by the Districts to the Annual Conference, which, in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, is composed of those who are thus elected by the Synods, together with the Legal Hundred, the treasurers of the various departments of Methodism, and forty-eight laymen, who are elected by the Representative Conference. The Conference is divided into a Representa-

tive Session composed of ministers and laymen, and a Pastoral Session. The Representative Session, which now meets before the Pastoral, came into being in the year 1878. Until this time the Conference was composed of ministers only. In 1878 the Pastoral Session met first, then the Representative Session, but now that order is reversed. The final Legislative Assembly of Methodism is the Conference, and its resolutions govern the policy of the Methodist Church. The above is the method of the government of the Wesleyan Methodist Church; and with certain adaptions, such as that of larger representation being given to the laity and the elimination of the Pastoral Session, is the form of government of the other Methodist Churches. It is hoped that within a few years all the Methodist Churches of England, Wales, and Scotland will be gathered into one Church. This has already come to pass in Ireland, Australia, Africa, and in Canada. The Union of Methodism in Canada has already passed into a greater Union; for three years ago the Methodist Church of Canada united with the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians to form the United Church of Canada. The question of Methodist Union in England, Scotland, and Wales has been discussed for the last thirteen years, and has now become the policy of the three Conferences of the Wesleyan Methodist, the Primitive Methodist, and the United Methodist Churches. It has been agreed that Parliament shall not be asked to give an Enabling Bill until there is a seventy-five per cent. majority in the Conference of each Church. This has not as yet been reached by all the three contracting Churches; but the goal is now in sight, and we believe that the difficulties in the way of this consummation

are slowly and surely being overcome. The following resolution was unanimously passed by the Wesleyan Conference of 1927: "The Conference, having confirmed the provisional Legislation in favour of the scheme for Methodist Union, declares that the Union of the Methodist Churches is now the avowed policy of the Representative Session of the Conference." The resolution was also affirmed by the Pastoral Session. The scheme for Union has been carefully prepared, and under the head of Doctrine declares: "The Doctrines of the Evangelical Faith, which Methodism has held from the beginning, and still holds, are based upon the revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures. The Methodist Church acknowledges this revelation as the supreme rule of faith and practice. These Evangelical Doctrines, to which the preachers of the Methodist Church, ministerial and lay, are pledged, are contained in Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament* and the first four volumes of *Sermons*. The *Notes on the New Testament* and the forty-four *Sermons* are not intended to impose a system of formal or speculative theology on Methodist preachers, but to set up standards of preaching and belief which should secure loyalty to the fundamental truths of the Gospel of Redemption, and ensure the continued witness of the Church to the realities of the Christian experience of Salvation." "The Conference shall be the final authority within the Church with regard to all questions concerning the interpretation of its doctrines. In any necessary Act by Parliament provision shall be made to secure the recognition of this power." This declaration is of great importance, for it makes explicit what was only implicit in the "Deed Poll". The Conference is here recognized

as the final arbiter in all questions of Doctrine. This will ensure loyalty to the Evangelical doctrines, and leave room for growth and development in interpretation.

When Union is consummated those who were parted from the Wesleyan Methodist Church on questions of organization will return to a Church in which they will find included those principles for which they fought, and the misunderstandings of yesterday will be forgotten in the fellowship of a brighter to-morrow. This Union, which draws nearer, and will, we believe, soon become an accomplished fact, will bring together those who have always been one in doctrine, in Evangelical passion, and in missionary enterprises. The Union is desired, not to make a large Methodist Church, but to create a Church which will, through united action, be more powerful in extending Christ's Kingdom than the three Churches were when fighting in distinct armies without unified command. We look forward with great expectancy to the day when all the Methodists of England, Scotland, and Wales will not only sing the same hymns and believe the same doctrines, but will express their unity of devotion and belief within one United Church. This is, indeed, a consummation devoutly to be wished. The Churches of Methodism throughout the world are linked together by the International Committee of World-wide Methodism, the members of which come from all the countries where Methodism is to be found. This Committee has an Eastern and a Western section, and every ten years a Pan-Methodist Conference is held.

## CHAPTER XIV

## METHODISM—A MISSIONARY CHURCH

THE Methodist Church was in its inception missionary, and has striven to be true to its genesis. Its parish is the world, and its Gospel is for the individual and for the whole of his life. It has ever been the sworn foe of parochialism, and of that false Catholicism which claims that word and hedges it round with many limitations. The life of Wesley teaches us that he gave no restrictive meaning to the domain of life which he claimed for Christ. His Gospel for the individual had a wide social application. Wesley was far ahead of his people, and it was a long time before Methodism realized the width and scope of his message. Like all pioneers he blazed a trail alone, and his followers were slow to follow.

Methodism was born in an age of individualism. Its doctrine of Christian Perfection sometimes led the Methodist to concentrate his efforts upon the perfecting of his own life and induced him to forget the social obligations of the Gospel. We believe that this doctrine has advanced in depth and meaning, for we realize more clearly than our fathers that we are all bound up together in the bundle of life. We see vividly that the doctrine of Perfection must have meaning both for the individual and for society.

The Methodists after the death of Wesley, took their share in the great emancipating campaigns. In the crusade for the liberation of the slaves Wilberforce found many of his strongest supporters amongst the people called Methodists; in the fight for the Reform Bill and for the reform of the Factory Laws they also played a magnificent part. Mr. Sidney Webb has paid his tribute to the Methodist farm labourers in Dorsetshire, who fought and suffered for better conditions of life for their fellow-workers; and has also noted the debt which Trade Unionism owes to the social devotion of Methodist miners in Northumberland and Durham. J. R. Green said that Wesley saved England from Revolution; and certainly working-men Methodists saved England from the paganism of a merely materialistic social revolution.

The Labour movement in England owes much to the fact that, unlike the Continental Socialistic movement, it was guided in its early days by many Labour leaders whose vision was cleansed by the spiritual truths which they learned in Methodist services. We rejoice to know that to-day many of the leaders of the Labour movement are children of John Wesley. No Church in this country has had in this respect a more honourable record than the Primitive Methodist Church. But it is not only amongst the labourers that we have seen the consciousness of a true sense of social justice, but also amongst many of all classes in the Methodist Churches. The rise of the various societies for social service within the Churches has been a great feature of the life of the Methodist Churches during the last decades. One of the departments of the Wesleyan Methodist Church under the control of the Conference is the Temperance and Social

Welfare Department. Much good work has been done by this department in seeking to curb the power of the drink traffic and of gambling, and to establish better relationships in the industrial world and in international affairs. Wesley told his preachers that they had nothing to do but to save souls, and he gave to those words a wide application. His children to-day are endeavouring to do the same, and to make the conditions of life such as shall help the development of the soul. They demand better social conditions for the labourer, decent housing, a fuller education for all, and a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. This work in connexion with social welfare was begun by pioneers, who gathered to their standards large numbers, and have permeated the thought of the Methodist Church with their social ideas.

Methodism owes an incalculable debt to Hugh Price Hughes, and the Forward Movement which is associated with his name. He was a fighting crusader, called men and women to a great campaign, and claimed all life for the Kingdom of God. He owed much to the social teaching of F. D. Maurice, and by his fiery eloquence and high devotion called the Methodist Church to new and greater campaigns. He was the founder of the West London Mission, as S. F. Collier was of the Manchester Mission. Owing to the zeal of these early missioners every large city and town in our land has at its centre a Methodist Mission Church which is a Church for the people and is a centre of religious and social activities. These missions have done much to shake Methodism out of a certain drowsiness which fell upon its people, and to give to them new life and vigour. The missioners have been true

to Wesley's words: "Go not only to those who need you, but to those who need you most." In these missions the triumphs of early Methodism have been repeated, men and women have been soundly converted to God, and have shown the genuineness of their new creation by the beauty and splendour of their lives. All who are familiar with the work of these missions will be aware of their triumphs, and will thank God for those pioneers who realized that new occasions teach new duties, and became all things to all men that they might gain some. We believe that the Home Missionary work of the Methodist Church has never been prosecuted with more inventiveness, nor with nobler faith, than during the last few decades, and we know that its trophies are many.

Its work has been done not only in the centres of cities and large towns, but also in the rural areas. In this work other methods have been adopted than in the crowded districts. The problems are more difficult because of the constant migration of the youth of the country-side into the towns and cities. Great help has been given to weak areas by grants of men and money from the Home Missions Department. In many cases weak and struggling circuits have been joined together into one strong Country Mission, under the watchful direction of an active and resouceful superintendent. A Commission of Inquiry is now being held, to collect information concerning rural Methodism, to visit these areas, and to devise some scheme whereby this fruitful and difficult work can be helped and forwarded.

Methodism has always had some of its best auxiliaries in the Army. The story of Methodism can never be fully told until we pay our debt of honour to those

Methodist soldiers who, scattered throughout the world, took Methodism with them in their hearts, and raised its flag where their military duties led them. The names of Captain Webb, John Haime, and Sampson Staniforth are worthy names in the long list of Methodist soldier heroes and missionaries. Nothing shows more clearly the missionary genius of Methodism than the story of those Methodist soldiers who sowed that seed which brought forth the harvest which is still being gathered in many lands. The Soldiers' and Sailors' Homes, established by Methodism throughout the British Empire, speak eloquently of the noble work which has been done by those who are in charge of the Methodist Naval, Army, and Air Board. The National Children's Home and Orphanage, founded by Dr. Bowman Stephenson, has done much noble service by its many Homes for destitute children. Modern Methodism is, to use the words of Francis Thompson, " trellised about with intertwining charities ". In this it is true to its genius, for the Methodist Revival speedily revealed its social sympathies. It gave to its followers a love for God and for all His children. They prayed for

> Thy yearning pity for mankind,
> Thy burning charity.

The wide social philanthrophies of John Wesley's day, and those of his children to-day, reveal the fact that the prayer has had many answers. Methodism in all generations has had within its border souls touched to fine issues. Amongst these we note Mary Bosanquet, who founded, in the eighteenth century, a Home for needy children. She reveals her yearning pity in these

words : " If in the street I saw a child ill-used or slighted by the person who seemed to have the care of it, or if I saw a horse or a dog oppressed or wounded, it was more than I could bear. I seemed to groan and travail in birth, as it were, for the whole creation." She is spiritually twin-sister to Margery Kempe, who was ancress in the fourteenth century at Lynn, of whom it is written : " When she saw a crucifix, or if she saw a man had a wound, or a beast, or if she saw a man beat a child before her, or smite a horse or another beast with a whip—if she might see or hear it, she thought she saw our Lord beaten or wounded."

The Deaconess Institute, also founded by Dr. Stephenson, has been singularly blessed in the work done by those who belong to the Deaconess Order, and its members are working with great success in this land and on the foreign field. The Bermondsey Settlement, the work of which was begun and is still carried on by Dr. Scott Lidgett, reveals that Methodism has been tenderly mindful of the need and value of Settlement work.

The activities of the Methodist people in the building of Churches have been great. It has been said " that since the death of Wesley the Methodist people throughout the world have opened on an average two chapels a day." In our land this work has been greatly helped by the wise direction and by the helpful grants of the Chapel Committee, and in the London area by the London Extension Fund.

The Methodist Church seeks to give to those who are to be its preachers an adequate theological training. It has no reason to be other than proud of its record. It insists that every candidate for its ministry must

have three years' theological training at one of the Methodist colleges, and four years of probationary study and examination before his Ordination. There is, therefore, a seven years' training prior to Ordination. The number of candidates for the Methodist Church is well in excess of the demand. Methodism has welcomed the new knowledge which, through the work of devout scholars, has been shed upon the Scriptures, and has fearlessly set its face towards the light. It seeks by its theological colleges to give to its students an intelligent understanding of the Scriptures and of theology, and to prepare them for their life's work as preachers of the Gospel. It has been greatly blessed by generations of theological professors, who have revealed by their scholarship and preaching that learning and Evangelism are not foes but allies.

Methodism is delightfully Catholic. Dr. James Hastings once said, when speaking of Methodism: "The Church which can produce both Dr. J. Hope Moulton and Peter Mackenzie is unique." It has produced mighty orators such as Samuel Bradburn, Robert Newton, Morley Punshon; theologians in Richard Watson and W. B. Pope; scholars in Adam Clarke, W. F. Moulton, G. G. Findlay; great missionaries in David Hill, James Hunt; saints in William Bramwell, Thomas Collins; but its most beautiful story can never be told, for it is wrapped in anonymity in the hidden stories of the lives and services of its unknown saints.

There has been a group of closely related movements which have brought in recent years a new orientation to Methodism and its people. They are all consciously or unconsciously children of the Student Christian Movement. Small and large groups have sought to

find an answer to life's stubborn questionings in prayer and silence, as well as in hard thinking. They have not met together to "argue for victory", but to find out God's will and know His power. In these assemblies men and women have learned that silence is full of God's speech, and that restless souls find rest by a wise passiveness rather than by contention. The members of these groups have realized that life is a great Quest, that the "Goal is love on the happy Hill"; and have felt with a new insistence the truth of the words: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find Rest in Thee." We know that to the members of small Societies revelations have been given as vivid and as flaming as those which came to the Holy Club in the eighteenth century. Tired ministers have been bathed in the fresh dew of the morning; truths dimly seen have been revealed as in the noon-day light. But this "questing" for God is only the message of one side of the shield, the other speaks of "Crusade". The members of these groups seek to bring to the work of calling men to God a new verve and inventiveness, and the story of the last decade has given abundant evidence of their daring skill in attack, and of their convincing victories. It is—*mutatis mutandis*—strangely like early Methodism. There we see both Quest and Crusade, for there was never the one without the other. Wesley knew that bare meditation unaccompanied by action soon becomes bleak and chilly, and that work without waiting upon God becomes arid and sterile. We see the brightest hopes of Methodism in all these group associations, which gather together for the quest and wait in lonely vigil, and then rise from their knees with a new sense of the world's needs and of the nearness and

saving help of Christ. We remember talking some years ago to Miss Lily Dougall, who said : " I look upon the Fellowship groups both of the Church of England and of the Free Churches as the great hope of these days for the Kingdom of God." It is impossible to emphasize too much the awakenings, the truer sense of values, the words aflame with fire, which have come to thousands through this way of prayer and action. Those who are in these fellowships know the truth of both of the sayings

Orare est Laborare
Laborare est Orare.

Everything changes, and yet there is nothing new. For the new group fellowships are the old class meetings revitalized and modernized.

In nothing has Methodism been so true to what is best within it as in Foreign Missionary labours. In Wesley's day there was the missionary work in New York, and in other of the States, in Newfoundland and in Antigua. Wesley had considered for a time sending out some of his preachers to Africa, but decided that the time was not yet. It was given to Dr. Coke to carry on the work which Wesley began, and he can rightly be considered the father of Methodist Foreign Missions. He is a living witness to the words, " The Love of Christ constraineth me." He established by his fiery zeal missions in Sierra Leone, Gibraltar, the West Indies, and America. He gave the strength of his days, his passionate love, and his wealth, to the great cause of the kingdom of Christ. He was restless in spirit, for he could say to his contemporaries, who thought him strangely Quixotic,

I hear a voice you cannot hear,
Which says I must not stay:
I see a hand you cannot see,
That beckons me away.

He had dreams of conquering the East for Christ, and was laughed at as a wild and foolish idealist. He, however, overcame all obstacles by offering to be responsible for the payment of the missionary expedition to the extent of £6,000. On New Year's Day, 1814, he sailed for the East, with seven other missionaries, and died on board the ship in the middle of the Indian Ocean. Dr. Coke almost literally realized his wish, "I would rather lie dead on the shores of India than be alive in Europe." Methodist Missions owe more to this man than we can ever realize. From 1784, when he published his pamphlet, *Plan of the Society for the Establishment of Missions among the Heathens*, until his death, he was the inspirer of all the Foreign Missionary work of Methodism. Dr. Coke's death accomplished even more than his life. When the news of his sudden passing reached England, a great sorrow fell upon the Methodist people, and also the spirit of dedication.

The Wesleyan Methodist Foreign Missionary Society, which had been founded in 1813, the year before Dr. Coke's death, was mightily inspired by the high devotion which the fiery Celt had revealed by his life and noble passing. We have not space to tell the story of the Foreign Missions of Methodism, but it certainly speaks of those of whom the world was not worthy, and still claims the services of the noblest and most adventurous of its children. Its missionary stations are scattered abroad in India, Ceylon, China, Burma, West Africa, South Africa, China, West Indies, and in France, Italy,

Spain, Portugal. Its Church members and probationers amount to 355,941. The work has grown vastly in extent and intensity. The missionary passion of Methodism has greatly influenced all the Churches.

When the Methodist revival began there were only two small societies which were doing Foreign Missionary work, the S.P.G. and S.P.C.K. All the great missionary societies came into being in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. We believe that this was the greatest conquest of the Revival. The Reformation had not kindled missionary passion. It had its own tasks, urgent and immediate, and it was too busy with them to regard the claims of the regions beyond. But the Evangel of the Wesleys was essentially missionary: their methods were those of the campaigner and crusader: and they were eager to respond to calls of need from all peoples. Its hymnology is probably more missionary than that of any other Church, except the Moravian, and although the Wesleys broke away from that community, they never shook themselves free from the powerful influence of its song. There was no need to place the label *Foreign Missions* above a section of the early Methodist hymn-book, for it was the *motif* of nearly all of its hymns. We believe that the article of a rising or falling Methodist Church is to be found in the answer to the question: "Is it aflame with the Missionary Fire?" Methodism believes that the only hope for each is in the fact that the Gospel is for all; it is in this intertwining of the needs of the world and the individual that we see something truly appealing in Methodism. It has been the way of Methodists all unconsciously to believe that if God is not the Saviour of the World, He is the Saviour of no one, and that

if God is the Saviour of the World He is the Saviour of each one.

Thy Sovereign grace to all extends,
Immense and unconfined;
From age to age it never ends;
It reaches all mankind.

Throughout the World its breadth is known,
Wide as infinity;
So wide, it never passed by one,
Or it had passed by me.

We believe that the Methodist of to-day seeks to be true to his noblest traditions, and to be loyal to the new light which God is giving to all His Churches. He yearns to serve the present age. He knows not what the future holds, but is confident that neither time nor disaster can destroy a faith which is based upon a living experience of Divine Grace. He believes that God will still direct the Methodist people to new enterprises and fresh triumphs, if they are true to their mission and their faith, expressed in Wesley's great sayings—"The world is my parish" and

The Best of all is God is with us.

# APPENDIX

N.B.—These statistics are the latest procurable.

| Denomination. | Ministers. | Lay Preachers. |
|---|---|---|
| WESLEYAN METHODISTS : | | |
| Great Britain | 2,500 | 19,024 |
| Ireland | 242 | 602 |
| Foreign Missions | 747 | 11,149 |
| French Conference | 26 | 63 |
| South African Conference | 282 | 5,942 |
| PRIMITIVE METHODISTS | 1,087 | 13,456 |
| UNITED METHODIST CHURCH | 713 | 4,735 |
| WESLEYAN REFORM UNION | 26 | 504 |
| INDEPENDENT METHODIST CHURCHES | 388 | — |
| AUSTRALASIAN METHODIST CHURCH | 1,136 | 8,036 |
| NEW ZEALAND METHODIST CHURCH † | 190 | 816 |
| UNITED STATES : | | |
| Methodist Episcopal ‡ | 20,905 | 14,556 |
| Methodist Episcopal, South | 8,304 | 5,264 |
| Methodist Protestant | 1,134 | 377 |
| African Methodist Episcopal (coloured) | 7,000 | 6,330 |
| African Methodist Episcopal Zion (coloured) | 3,962 | — |
| Coloured Methodist Episcopal | 2,638 | — |
| Free Methodist | 1,200 | — |
| Wesleyan Methodist | 645 | 45 |
| Primitive Methodist | 80 | 75 |
| Congregational Methodist | 500 | — |
| New Congregational Methodist | 27 | — |
| Union American Methodist Episcopal (coloured) | 205 | 105 |
| African Union Methodist Protestant (coloured) | 260 | — |
| Reformed Zion Union Apostolic (coloured) | 79 | — |
| Reformed Methodist Union Episcopal (coloured) | 48 | — |
| British Methodist Episcopal (coloured) | 20 | 6 |
| African Methodist Protestant | 675 | — |
| African American Methodist Episcopal | 35 | — |
| METHODIST CHURCH OF CANADA § | 2,475 | 1,946 |
| JAPAN METHODIST CHURCH | 158 | 140 |
| Totals | 57,687 | 92,991 |

* Seating accommodation, 2,418,356.

† These figures include the Solomon Islands Mission with 64 lay preachers, 4,791 members, 41 Sunday schools, 1,384 scholars and 122 churches and preaching places.

‡ Methodism is also represented in several European countries by Conferences and Missions affiliated to the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, and their membership is included in the figures given above. The latest

The members in Junior Classes are not reckoned.

| Church Members and Probationers. | Sunday Schools. | Officers and Teachers. | Sunday Scholars. | Churches, etc. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 519,510 | 7,321 | 120,215 | 825,604 | 8,600 * |
| 29,590 | 336 | 2,228 | 22,586 | 416 |
| 287,759 | 2,981 | 10,741 | 168,669 | 5,311 |
| 1,757 | 25 | 85 | 693 | 55 |
| 169,583 | 1,000 | 3,295 | 45,777 | 4,674 |
| 220,806 | 3,971 | 54,866 | 394,050 | 4,554 |
| 153,757 | 2,068 | 37,777 | 242,886 | 2,216 |
| 10,178 | 203 | 2,412 | 24,085 | 215 |
| 10,502 | 165 | 3,243 | 24,563 | 165 |
| 166,101 | 3,511 | 30,916 | 203,431 | 3,752 |
| 29,425 | 465 | 3,121 | 31,632 | 1,030 |
| 5,152,236 | 17,248 | 407,182 | 4,217,372 | 28,656 |
| 2,602,316 | 16,346 | 172,760 | 2,014,788 | 17,540 |
| 188,878 | 1,988 | 17,495 | 180,071 | 2,257 |
| 698,029 | 7,200 | 29,996 | 320,000 | 7,500 |
| 412,315 | 2,092 | 16,245 | 193,000 | 2,716 |
| 331,021 | 2,543 | 18,884 | 193,000 | 3,577 |
| 40,251 | 1,280 | 10,150 | 68,945 | 1,260 |
| 21,500 | 625 | 3,800 | 32,000 | 550 |
| 11,905 | 102 | 1,524 | 14,781 | 102 |
| 21,000 | 182 | 1,146 | 8,785 | 352 |
| 1,256 | 27 | 143 | 1,298 | 24 |
| 18,812 | 67 | 321 | 2,531 | 267 |
| 3,750 | 49 | 441 | 3,088 | 58 |
| 10,000 | 36 | 212 | 1,508 | 58 |
| 2,772 | 18 | 204 | 1,792 | 25 |
| 700 | 18 | 125 | — | 21 |
| 26,100 | — | — | — | 650 |
| 5,811 | 25 | — | 934 | 27 |
| 414,047 | 3,807 | 43,333 | 351,633 | 4,797 |
| 29,420 | 554 | — | 42,570 | 162 |
| 11,591,087 | 76,253 | 992,860 | 9,632,072 | 101,587 |

returns available are: Austria, 1,042 members; Bulgaria, 757; Denmark, 4,201; Finland, 2,254; France, 1,094; Germany (North), 23,200; Germany (South), 18,054; Hungary, 692; Italy, 3,860; Jugo-Slavia, 1,440; Norway, 7,567; Russia (and Baltic Mission), 3,545; Sweden, 16,475; Switzerland, 11,938.

§ These figures are for 1925, the year before the Methodists of Canada joined the United Church of Canada.

# INDEX

# INDEX


Adam, Thomas, 108
Adoption, 80
America, 124–51
American Civil War, 129, 132, 149
Andrew, Bishop, 148
Annesley, Samuel, 2
Ante Nicene Church, 157
Antinomianism, 102
Asbury, Francis, 127, 141–4
Assurance, 78
Augustine, 26, 83

Band meetings, 54
Benson, Joseph, 92
Bermondsey Settlement, 191
Berridge, John, 111
Bett, Henry, 122
Bible Christians, 175
Björnson, 65
Boardman, Richard, 126
Bocardo, 9
Böhler, Peter, 22–4
Bolzius, 16, 17
Bourne, Hugh, 170
Bray, Mr., 24
Bristol, 33
Bunyan, John, 26
Burton, Dr., 13
Butler, Joseph, 42
Byrom, Dr., 13

Calvinism, 96–102
Cartwright, Peter, 146
Cennick, John, 68
Chapel Committee, 191
Christian Perfection, 81–5
Classes, 55
Clayton, John, 9, 10, 13
Clowes, William, 172
Coke, Dr., 131, 135, 141, 195
Collier, Samuel, 188
Conference, 57, 181, 183
Conventicle Act, 160
Conversion, 75
Cowper, William, 69
Cromwell, Oliver, 18, 41

Deaconess Institute, 191
Deed of Declaration, 159
Delafield, Dr., 89
Dimond, S. G., 67
Doddridge, Dr., 62
Dougall, Lily, 194
Drummond, Archbishop, 74

Embury, Philip, 124
Epworth, 25

Fetter Lane Society, 32, 34, 49, 51
Fletcher, John, 115–19
Fletcher, Mrs., 82, 154, 191
Foreign Missions, 194–6
Forgiveness of sins, 78
Foy, Captain, 53
Furz, John, 120

Garrettson, Freeborn, 144
Georgia, 16–21
Gibson, Bishop, 14, 155
Green, J. R., 187
Greenfield, Edward, 77
Grimshaw, William, 113

Harris, Howell, 59
Heck, Barbara, 124,
Hernhuth, 30

Hervey, J., 10, 42
Holy Club, 10, 19
Holy Communion, 114
Home Missions, 189
Hopkey, Sophie, 19
Horneck, Dr., 31
Hughes, H. Maldwyn, 181
Huntingdon, Countess of, 99, 110
Hymn singing, 69

Inge, Dean, 72
Ireland, 59–60

Johnson, Samuel, 89

Kempe, Margery, 191
Kempis, Thomas à, 6, 7
Kilham, Alexander, 167
Kirkham, Betty, 7
Kirkham, Robert, 7

Labour Movement, 187
Law, William, 6, 13, 94
Lee, Jesse, 145
Lidgett, J. Scott, 191
Local preachers, 181
Lowth, Bishop, 130
Luther, 61

Masefield, John, 158
Maxwell, Lady, 60
Maxwell, Thomas, 56
McKendree, William, 146
Methodist New Connexion, 169
Methodists, 9
Mitchell, Thomas, 119
Model Deed, 159
Molther, Peter, 94
Moravians, 13, 15
Mysticism, 93

Nash, Beau, 44
National Children's Home, 190
Navy, Army, and Air Board, 190
Nelson, John, 118–19
Newman, Cardinal, 11
Newton, John, 69, 113, 117

Oglethorpe, General, 13, 14
Oliver, Thomas, 68
Open-air preaching, 36, 37
Oxford, 6–12, 23

Pascal, 26
Perfect Love, 81
Perronet, Edward, 68
Perronet, Vincent, 68
Peters, Sarah, 88
Pilmoor, Joseph, 126
Pitt, William, 89
Plan of Pacification, 162
Potter, Bishop, 8
Primitive Methodism, 170

Real Presence, 156
Romaine, William, 110

Taylor, Jeremy, 6
Temperance and Social Welfare, 187
Told, Silas, 87

Scotland, 60
Shadford, George, 128
Shent, William, 104
Simon, J. S., 49, 51, 54
Sinless Perfection, 81
Slavery, 19, 148
Southey, Robert, 65
Spangenberg, Bishop, 15, 18
Standards of United Church, 184
Standards of Wesleyan Methodism, 181
Stephenson, Bowman, 190, 191
Stillness, Doctrine of, 94
Strawbridge, Robert, 125
Student Christian Movement, 192

Union of Methodist Churches, 183
United Methodist Free Churches, 177
United Society, Rise of, 51

Venn, Henry, 108

Walker, Samuel, 107
Walsh, Thomas, 82, 121
Watson, William, 90
Watts, Isaac, 19, 62, 63, 77
Webb, Captain, 125
Webb, Sidney, 187
Wesley, Bartholomew, 2
Wesley, Charles, 5, 14, 24, 62, 63, 117, 136, 138, 140, 158
Wesley, John (senr.), 2
Wesley, John—
  Birth, 7
  At Oxford, 7
  Fellow of Lincoln, 8
  At Wroote, 8
  Deacon, 8
  Priest, 8
  Georgia, 14, 21
  Aldersgate Street, 27
  Open-air preaching, 36, 40
  Extension of his work, 41–60
  Hymn-writer, 63
  His theology, 72–86
Wesley, John—
  Social and theological battles, 87–106
  Love of Primitive Church, 157
  His helpers, 107–23
  American War, 129
  Ordinations, 133, 154
  Church of England, 152–65
  Death in 1791, 16
Wesley, Samuel, 1, 2, 3, 10, 12
Wesley, Samuel (jnr.), 5
Wesley, Sarah, 140
Wesley, Susannah, 3, 4, 5, 56
Whitefield, George, 10, 21, 35, 43, 96–9, 126, 136, 138, 140, 158
Wiseman, F. L., 67
Witness of the Spirit, 76

Yeats, W. B., 118

Zinzendorf, Count, 52

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

15492

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED
LONDON AND WOKING

15492

BX
8231
B7
1928

**Brash, William Bardsley, 1877–**

**Methodism, by W. Bardsley Brash ...** Garde[illegible] C
N. Y., Doubleday, Doran, 1928.

xi, 207, [1] p. 19½cm. (*Half-title:* The faiths: varieties expression)

1. Methodism—Hist. I. Title. II. Series.

CCSC/jc

Library of Congress BX8231.B7
[31c1]